



## BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN

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Chairman Taylor Brown and members of the Senate Agriculture,  
Livestock and Irrigation committee, Montana Senate  
PO Box 200500  
Helena, MT 59620-0500

### BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN COMMENTS ON HB 194 – DO NOT PASS

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock and  
Irrigation committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on HB  
194. Mr. Chairman, I request that my testimony be entered into the  
hearing record. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign opposes HB 194 and the sponsor's attempt to  
increase the costs of transplanting or reintroducing buffalo in Montana  
by amending MCA 87-1-216 to mandate a forage analysis.

HB 194 seeks to impose extra costs and another unfunded mandate - a  
forage analysis - and increase the tax burden on Montanan's with no  
corresponding benefit for wildlife or wildlife habitat.

The Montana Legislature has already imposed costly unfunded mandates  
on any attempt to reintroduce buffalo as a wildlife species in the state. As  
MCA 87-1-216 stands, the legislature requires Montanan's to pay for the  
costs of fencing, animal identification and health protocols, containment  
measures, and imposes property and safety liability on the state. Despite  
an unfinished public process, the legislature has already decided the  
outcome of any plan to reintroduce buffalo as wildlife in Montana to  
require a fenced, domesticated herd.

In addition, SB 284, which passed the Senate for consideration in the House, cedes state authority over wildlife to County Commissioner(s) control by requiring their approval before buffalo could be released or relocated in a county or counties in Montana. SB 284 also requires County Commissioners to make certain findings that are arbitrary and capricious and designed to thwart a positive finding for transplanting or relocating buffalo in Montana.

Clearly, the outcome sought by HB 194 is to turn the reintroduction of a valued native species into a costly, undesirable, and unfeasible option.

Biologists have found the status of wild buffalo as a wildlife species in Montana as "at risk because of very limited and/or potentially declining population numbers, range and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state." S.M. Adams & A.R. Dood, *Background Information on Issues of Concern for Montana: Plains Bison Ecology, Management, and Conservation*. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Bozeman, Montana (2011).

Wildlife in Montana belongs not to the state or any one person or interest group; native species belong to future generations who are the beneficiaries of our wildlife heritage trust.

Wildlife reintroduction is the responsibility of wildlife agencies entrusted with ensuring our wildlife heritage is protected and persists for future generations to enjoy and experience.

In poll after poll, the majority of Montanan's have made it clear that we favor restoration of wild buffalo including 70% of 400 registered voters polled by Moore Information in 2011 and nearly eight in ten of 500 Montana voters polled by Tulchin Research in 2014 support restoring wild buffalo populations on public lands (76% support) and on tribal lands (78% support). By a vast majority, Montanan's favor (72% support) wild buffalo being managed like wildlife, not livestock.

Montana's wild lands, wildlife including wild buffalo, recreation and open spaces are cherished by Montanans and draw millions of people who annually sustain a multi-billion dollar economy. HB 194 stands in conflict with Montanan's who hold that special actions can and should be made to ensure that our wild places and the native species that inhabit them are preserved for future generations.

HB 194 is not amendable. Thank you for taking action to prevent the erosion of Montanan's ability to recover and save our natural wildlife heritage by voting against HB 194.

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## **About Buffalo Field Campaign**

Buffalo Field Campaign was founded in 1997 to protect the natural habitat of wild migratory buffalo and native wildlife, to stop the slaughter and harassment of America's last wild buffalo as well as to advocate for their lasting protection, and to work with people of all Nations to honor the sacredness of the wild buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign is located in West Yellowstone, Gallatin County, Montana, and is supported by volunteers and citizens in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, and by people from around the world who value America's native wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and enjoy the natural wonders of our irreplaceable public lands.

As an organization and on behalf of our members, Buffalo Field Campaign is deeply concerned and actively involved in protecting the last remaining descendants of indigenous buffalo in North America to occupy their original range.

Buffalo Field Campaign publicizes the plight of the buffalo, works to end their slaughter by government agencies, and advocates for the long-term protection of viable populations of wild buffalo and year-round habitat.

Buffalo Field Campaign actively engages the American public to honor and protect our cultural heritage by allowing wild buffalo to exist as an indigenous wildlife species fulfilling their ecological role on their native landscape.

Buffalo Field Campaign volunteers patrol habitat where buffalo migrate within the Yellowstone and Madison River drainages. These direct experiences with buffalo on their native habitats inform our actions and strengthen our commitment to gaining permanent protections for America's last wild buffalo.