



The National Bison Association (NBA) Weekly Update is an exclusive service for NBA members.

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## ***NBA Weekly Update for April 16, 2021***

*The Weekly Update is a service designed to provide National Bison Association members with news and information affecting bison production and marketing. Many items in the Weekly Update are reprinted from outside sources. The content of those articles does not necessarily reflect the policy position of the National Bison Association. The articles are reproduced here only as a means to keep our membership informed as much as possible of all information and opinions relating to bison that is circulating publicly.*

### **Senators Hoeven, Bennet, Representatives Perlmutter, Long Introduce Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act**

WASHINGTON – Senators John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) and Representatives Ed Perlmutter (D-Colo.) and Billy Long (R-Mo.) today introduced the Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act, legislation to prevent water buffalo products from being deceptively labeled as buffalo, which misleads consumers and negatively impacts the U.S. bison industry.

The bipartisan bill provides the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with authority to ensure that products with water buffalo are marketed as “water buffalo” so consumers aren’t misled to believe the product contains bison, which is commonly referred to as buffalo in the United States. Bison products would continue to be labeled as “bison” or

“buffalo”.

“Our bipartisan legislation would prevent consumers from being misled and ensure that labels clearly reflect whether a product contains water buffalo or bison,” said Hoeven. “Specifically, the legislation requires water buffalo to be accurately labeled and establishes that buffalo is a common name for bison. That’s good for consumers and good for bison ranchers.”

“Colorado’s bison producers work hard to grow their markets and deliver high quality meat. Misleading labeling undermines their efforts and makes it harder for consumers to know what they’re buying,” said Bennet. “By requiring water buffalo products to have accurate labels, our bill helps support American bison producers and delivers transparency for consumers.”

“Americans have long associated the term ‘buffalo’ with American bison. Some companies are now importing water buffalo meat and ingredients and labeling it only as ‘buffalo’ which can mislead consumers,” said Perlmutter. “The Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act will halt that deceptive practice and protect consumers and ranchers alike.”

“The American public has the right to know exactly what is in the products that they’re purchasing. Many Americans associate the term ‘buffalo’ with American bison, and for far too long, companies have exploited this misconception,” said Long. “The Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act will protect consumers and ranchers by preventing companies from using generic terms that are clearly intended to mislead consumers.”

“Bison producers have worked hard to connect with consumers around the high quality of the meat, and the role that these magnificent animals are playing in restoring healthy grasslands,” said Dave Carter, Executive Director of the National Bison Association. “Those efforts are being undermined by deceptively-labeled water buffalo. The Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act will protect both the hard-working ranchers and their customers.”

The senators introduced the legislation after hearing concerns that imported water buffalo meat and pet food ingredients on the market are being deceptively labeled as “buffalo.” The senators led a letter to the FDA outlining these concerns, and in response, the FDA indicated that it does not currently have a specific regulation regarding the marketing of either water buffalo or bison. The agency agreed that water buffalo should be labeled as “water buffalo” and bison should be labeled as “bison” or “buffalo”.

In addition to Hoeven and Bennet, the legislation is cosponsored by Senators Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Tina Smith (D-Minn.) and John Thune (R-S.D.).

The legislation is supported by the American Farm Bureau Federation, Colorado Farm Bureau, Intertribal Buffalo Council, National Bison Association, National Farmers Union, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, North Dakota Farmers Union and Rocky Mountain Farmers Union.

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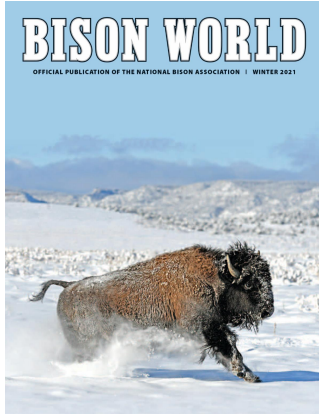
## **FSA Administrator Pledges to Help Clarify Bison Eligibility for CFAP-2**

USDA’s top official at the Farm Service Agency offered yesterday to work with the National Bison Association to assure that bison producers are able to obtain the assistance they are eligible for under Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2.

During a webinar that FSA hosted for livestock organizations yesterday, NBA Executive Director Dave Carter reported that the association has received some calls from bison producers who were being told by local FSA offices that bison producers are not eligible during the reopened phase for CFAP-2.

“Please provide me with the names of those offices, and we will work with them directly to let them know that bison producers are eligible,” said Zach Ducheaux, FSA administrator.

Any bison producer being told that they are ineligible for CFAP-2 is encouraged to provide



## Winter Bison World Magazine Available Online

One of the perks of NBA membership is access to the Bison World magazine before the printed copies arrive in the mail! Production on the Winter issue has wrapped up and it is now available on the website at:

<https://bisoncentral.com/publication/bison-world-magazine/>.

You will need to log in to the member area to access the magazine.

The annual membership directory will be mailing with this issue.

The flipbook version of the magazine can be viewed right on your computer. Handy links allow you to open it into a new window, make it larger, magnify certain features and even print pages if desired. The realistic page-turning sounds make it feel like you are reading the printed version of the magazine.

The hard copy magazine is currently being printed and will mail shortly.

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## Spring Issue Bison World Advertising Now Available

Production is now underway on the Spring issue of the Bison World magazine.

There are a variety of advertising options available, from 1/8 page all the way to full page. Lifetime and Active NBA members will enjoy discounted rates as part of their membership perks. Karen can work with you to tailor an advertising campaign that fits your budget and targets your message!

The advertising deadline is April 15. Editorial submissions and suggestions are welcome at any time but will also be subjected to the April 15 deadline for the Spring issue.

For more information about editorial submissions or advertising your ranch, business or events, contact [Karen@bisoncentral.com](mailto:Karen@bisoncentral.com) or call (605) 381-3738.

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## NBA & RMBA Plan 2021 Summer Conference in Cheyenne, WY

Members of the NBA 2021 Summer Conference planning committee met this week to plan a great event for this June 27 – 29 at Little America Hotel, Conference Center and Golf Course. Reserve your discounted lodging now, details at <https://bisoncentral.com/nba-summer-conference/>.

The conference, co-hosted by the Rocky Mountain Bison Association, will begin with an optional reception on Sunday evening with an informal corn-hole “Bison Bag Toss” tournament with a cash bar and hors d’oeuvres to socialize and catch up. Monday will include a two-ranch bison ranch tour featuring Big Heart Bison in Carr, CO, and Cold Creek Buffalo, located on the Terry Ranch outside of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Attendees will spend the afternoon at the Terry Ranch before returning to the hotel for dinner and the always-entertaining benefit auction.

Tuesday will feature a day of learning at the hotel and will include pertinent topics to bison management and marketing. While speakers are being finalized, topics will include fencing, Section 32 Surplus Removal Program, herd health and more.

While the NBA hopes to find a sponsor to film the presentations for later viewing in the members’ area of the website - <https://bisoncentral.com/publication/conference->

[presentations/](#) - it will not stream the conference live. Sponsorship packages are being developed, if interested in sponsoring the event, please email [Jim@bisoncentral.com](mailto:Jim@bisoncentral.com), or [Dcarter@bisoncentral.com](mailto:Dcarter@bisoncentral.com).

Please stay tuned as we finalize the agenda and registration should open in the next week or two at <https://bisoncentral.com/nba-summer-conference/> and we hope to see you in Cheyenne!

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## **USDA Answers Questions from Bison Processors on Section 32 Round 2 Purchase Program**

Nearly a dozen officials from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) held a conference call with the NBA Commercial Marketers' Committee yesterday to answer questions and to address concerns over the technical specifications that have been developed for the second round of bison meat purchases under the Section 32 Surplus Removal Program.

The solicitation for purchasing up to \$10 million in ground bison meat and stew meat for distribution in federal food and nutrition programs is anticipated to be issued in early May.

USDA is altering some of the technical requirements for this round of purchases in an effort to position the bison business to be qualified to supply a full range of federal nutrition programs moving forward.

Historically, USDA has only purchased bison meat for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). The National Bison Association has urged USDA to include bison in its list of foods eligible to be purchased for the federal school lunch program and other nutrition initiatives. The technical requirements for supplying those programs, however, are more stringent than the rules for supplying bison meat for FDPIR. The upcoming solicitation will be conducted utilizing those tighter requirements.

In Thursday's conference call several bison marketers questioned the cost and feasibility of meeting the requirement to have an AMS meat grader on hand at all times when ground bison is being produced. Processors must pay for the cost of that grader, including travel time to and from the plant. One marketer noted that, because of the location of many smaller plants in rural areas, that cost could be significant.

The AMS officials on the call agreed to conduct some internal meetings to try and develop an approach that would address that concern.

NBA Executive Director Dave Carter noted after the meeting, "While the focus of Section 32 is to remove some of the surplus animals backlogged in the pipeline, it's encouraging that AMS wants to develop a longer-term relationship program that could help get bison meat in front of school children across the country. However, we have to make sure that the technical requirements imposed on processors are more speed bumps that absolute barriers."

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## **American Bison Society Webinar Brings Together Private, Public and Tribal Bison Interests**

Roughly 100 stakeholders from public, Tribal and private herds came together this week to explore opportunity for expanding the Shared Stewardship of bison restoration across the United States.

Organizers of the conference had asked participants to address the essential questions during the two-day conference:

- What does Shared Stewardship mean to us collectively?
- How can a Shared Stewardship strategy help us advance our shared goals for bison restoration? This year? In five years?

- Where can we get started? What will it take?

Ken Klemm, NBA Board member and chair of the association's Conservation Committee provided one of the formal presentations during the conference. Klemm challenged participants to consider that wealth creation must play a key role in any successful effort to restore bison to their historic habitat.

Leroy Little Bear, a member of the Blackfeet Confederacy and professor emeritus at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, noted that many Tribal discussions regarding stewardship of their land included an empty seat. "That seat was for the buffalo," Little Bear said. "We always need to ask the buffalo what is best."

Klemm noted that holistic decision-making, which he has utilized in his bison management since the 1980's, includes considerations for the animals, the land, and the people. That process involved a way to make sure that the bison were part of the decision-making.

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## Orana Wood Retires from Bison Business

Longtime former National Bison Association employee Orana Wood formally retired from the world of bison today, as she stepped down from her position as Human Resources Assistant for Rocky Mountain Natural Meats, where she has worked for the past 10 years.



Woods worked for the National Bison Association from 1994 to 2007, where she helped steer the organization through its early days following the merger of the National Buffalo Association and the American Bison Association. She handled a variety of administrative functions for the NBA and coordinated the logistics for the Gold Trophy Show and Sale each year.

"Orana really helped me get settled in as NBA Executive director when I came on board in 2001," said NBA Director Dave Carter. "She introduced me to the members and helped steer me in the right direction while I was trying to get my feet on the ground. She was a friend to every NBA member who called the office."

Jim Matheson, assistant NBA director, added, "Orana was a great coworker and remains a dear friend. She'll be missed, but I wish her and Robert all the best in their next adventure! And I'm certain that our paths will cross again down the buffalo-road."

Carter and Matheson joined the staff of Rocky Mountain Natural Meats for a farewell luncheon for Woods earlier today.

Orana and her husband Robert, are moving to Durand, WI to be closer to their daughter Audrey and husband, and their grandchildren Cato and Clara.

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## West Virginia's only commercial bison farm goes all in on agritourism

*(From Farm and Dairy)*

ERRA ALTA, W.Va. — Liz Riffle's friends thought she was kind of crazy when she told them she was starting a bison farm in 2017. But for Liz and her husband, Jimmie, it made perfect sense that their first foray into farming would be raising the national mammal.

"Everybody else raises cattle," she said. "We wanted to do something different."

[Riffle Farms](#) is the only commercial bison farm in West Virginia. Raising American bison, as they're formally called, seemed like a perfect combination for the Riffles' interests and backgrounds.

The couple met in the U.S. Navy and are both trained in the healthcare field. Jimmie still works as a nurse practitioner in the Navy. Liz served as a nurse for six years before exiting the military in 2016.

For health-conscious folks, bison is the red meat of choice for people looking to replace beef in their diet, Liz said. Bison has become known as a heart healthy meat because of its low saturated fat and cholesterol content.

They thought people would enjoy having locally sourced bison meat. But raising buffalo provided a somewhat unexpected alternative source of income: agritourism. "We knew having bison in West Virginia was going to be a heck of a niche in and of itself," Liz said.

Read [more](#).

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## Looking for Bison in the Wichita Mountains

*(From Texas Monthly)*

Why did the Longhorn cross the road? To get back to Texas. That's the hilarious joke I told my kids as one of the impressive ungulates ambled down the asphalt past our SUV. We had stopped suddenly after the creature appeared from the dense fog just a few hundred feet in front of us. It was a chilly March day in the [Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge](#), twenty miles northwest of Lawton, in southwestern Oklahoma. After nearly a full day of trudging through fog that just wouldn't burn off, we'd become convinced there were neither mountains nor the advertised free-roaming herds of bison (the refuge boasts about 650 of North America's largest mammal), but we'd at least witnessed a real live [Texas Longhorn](#) in Oklahoma.

The trip was supposed to be a chance for me to get a break from my family—and for them to get some time away from me. Since the pandemic started, my wife and I had worked from home while our two kids attended virtual school from their bedrooms. We love one another, but that is a lot of time together under one roof. We're lucky to live in a decent-

sized house, so it's not like being trapped in an elevator together. But after a year, that's what it felt like. I wanted out, if only a brief respite. I planned a weekend in the Wichita Mountains, where I would hike in the wilderness, gawk at roadside wildlife, and not make lunch and dinner for my children.

It's my fault that things changed. The week before the trip, my kids—eleven-year-old Madeline and nine-year-old James—tagged along on an hour-long trek for barbecue. In normal times, they are frequent road-trip partners for my job as Texas Monthly's barbecue editor. The short journey was unexpectedly nostalgic. The taste of liberation was too great for the children, so they begged for another outing and began hinting at the Oklahoma trip they'd heard me talking about. So, in the end, solitude was achieved—just not for me. The three of us took off on a Saturday morning, leaving my wife with the house all to herself for the entire weekend.

Read [more](#).

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Terry Bison Ranch to kick off more summer events with music partnerships  
*(From Wyoming News Now)*

CHEYENNE, Wyo. Summer 2021 looks hopeful for Wyoming's live music industry. Terry Bison Ranch, in partnership with Chinook Drive-In and AEG presents Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest, will be hosting live concerts, movie drive-ins and concert drive-ins.

Terry Bison Ranch is a 5,000-capacity venue. Jim Walter, Vice President Director of Sales and Marketing for Visit Cheyenne said this is great news for Wyoming's expanding music industry. He said the first concert events will begin May 8 and continue throughout the summer. Aside from Terry Bison, there will be performances at the Lincoln Theatre as well as live music at the Outlaw Saloon.

The events are created to be COVID-flexible, to maintain statewide regulations as they change.

Ely Corliss, co-partner of The Chinook drive-in at Terry Bison Ranch, said they will be introducing line-ups from different genres including Bluegrass, Rock, Electronics and Country. He said this will help expand the horizons of Wyoming music while giving exposure to artists like Charles the First and Subtronics.

Read [more](#).

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## **The \$5 Million Bison Center in Custer State Park Galloping Toward Ground-Breaking**

*(From the Grand Forks Herald)*

PIERRE, S.D. — South Dakota's legislature chipped in [\\$500,000](#) during the recently completed legislative session for a bison interpretive center in Custer State Park, and state officials say plans for the structure are moving along briskly.

"Next week, we'll get our first look at an interpretive design," said Matthew Synder, Superintendent of CSP, speaking before the Game, Fish and Parks Commission's regular meeting that convened last week. "Things are tracking really well."

Snyder said he hopes to be "breaking ground" in June.

The bison center [sprung](#) from the mind of Helmsley Charitable Trust trustee Waltzer Panzirer, who worked on a Boy Scouts project with his son, say park officials.

The trust donated \$4 million, with Panzirer giving \$100,000 of his own money to fuel the \$500,000 in private donations needed. The legislature also authorized spending \$500,000 on the project.

The bison are often the [main attraction in the park](#), stemming from three dozen bison purchased by Fort Pierre rancher Scotty Philip in the early 20th Century.

One question raised by Senate Minority Leader [Troy Heinert](#), a Democrat and enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, during the debate on the legislature's portion is whether or not the center would "telling the correct story" of the bison.

During committee questioning, the state director of parks and recreation, Scott Simpson, assured Heinert the park had "learned our lesson" and would "provide input sessions" to hear from the public.

Read [more](#).

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## **7 drowned Yellowstone bison winched and hauled away**

*(From the Jackson Hole News and Guide)*

When the Yellowstone Plateau melts out each spring it's not unusual for a hapless animal to emerge from under the ice at Blacktail Ponds near Mammoth.

The occasional carcasses are a draw for throngs of wildlife enthusiasts and photographers hoping to peep scavenging grizzly bears and wolves along one of the only roads open this time of year in Yellowstone National Park. This year, however, park staff found seven bison drowned in the shallow, spring-fed roadside ponds. Over the weekend the thousands of pounds of rotting meat disappeared after being winched and then driven away by Yellowstone rangers.

"They attracted large numbers of visitors in an area with few turnouts and poor visibility around corners which created hazardous driving conditions," Yellowstone spokeswoman Linda Veress explained in an email. "The carcasses were removed in order to prevent traffic congestion and injuries to pedestrians."

Four of the intact, waterlogged bison were removed Friday. The remaining three animals came out the following day. They were all taken to designated carcass dumps that are closed to the public, Veress said.

To rangers' knowledge, Yellowstone's famed large carnivores had not yet discovered the bison smorgasbord before the carcass removal project.

Read [more](#).

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## **Denver Returns 14 Bison to Tribal Land In Reparations, Conservation Effort**

*(From NPR)*

Fourteen American bison headed to their new homes on native land this month. Indigenous tribes received the bison from Denver Parks and Recreation as a form of reparations, the first gift in a 10-year ordinance to donate surplus bison that will also go toward tribal conservation efforts.

The bison came from the department's two conservation herds that descended from a handful of historic Yellowstone bison. Denver typically auctions off its surplus bison to avoid overgrazing, but there was still an excess after this year's auction in March. "We just decided we couldn't have another auction," says Scott Gilmore, DPR's deputy executive director. "We could have, but that wasn't something we really wanted to do." Instead, the city [decided to return bison](#) to their native habitats — the culmination of what Gilmore says involved 10 years of talks and trust-building with tribal partners who have long advocated for bison restoration.

"It just really made a lot of sense to possibly look and see how we could work with other tribes to maybe donate bison to the establishment of these herds that are starting all over



the place," he says.

Thirteen bison went to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in Oklahoma and one went to the Tall Bull Memorial Council in Colorado. All 14 were adult females.

"Probably half of the bison that we donated were pregnant," Gilmore says. "So, not only did the Cheyenne Arapaho tribe in Oklahoma get 13 bison, they will have, six or seven calves, probably in the next three or four weeks."

Read more [here](#).

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## **Eat, Roam, Repeat: Can the Bison's Big Appetite Stop Spain's Forest Fires?**

*(From the Guardian)*

As the temperatures begin to rise, Spain is braced for another summer of the forest fires that over the past 10 years have destroyed about [741,000 hectares \(1.8m acres\)](#) of forest.

Last year, fires consumed 45,000 hectares according to government estimates, the year before [60,000 hectares](#), and there are signs that, as in California and Australia, the fires are becoming more frequent and more intense.

Climate change and rural depopulation are among the factors driving an increase in Spain's forest fires, says Mónica Parrilla, who is responsible for Greenpeace's forest fire campaign.

At the same time, a decline in sheep herding is leaving [Spain](#) without a large herbivore to clear the undergrowth that fuels the fires.

Step forward the European bison, driven to extinction in Spain 10,000 years ago, but now growing in numbers due to a program to reintroduce the species.

Fernando Morán, a veterinarian who is director of the European Bison [Conservation](#) Center of Spain, describes the bison as "a living strimmer". The animals, which weigh up to 1,000kg, eat around 30kg of vegetation a day made up of about 30% wood fibre and 70% shoots and leaves.

"The European bison delivers immediate biodiversity," Morán says. "It opens up dense parts of the forest which lets in the light and allows grass to grow instead of scrub, which lowers fire risk and, in turn, benefits numerous species through food and freedom of movement."

Read [more](#).

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## **Colorado's Bill for Deregulation of Meat Sales Sent to A Joint Conference Committee**

*(From Food Safety News)*

A bill with the Colorado Legislature's unanimous support for an alternative way of acquiring meat within the state has hit a snag.

Before April 1, it looked like the Colorado General Assembly was about to send Senate Bill 21-079 to the governor for his signature. The new law takes effect immediately with his signature. It would permit Colorado consumers to buy shares of animals for eating that have not been inspected and are from Colorado producers who are not licensed.

The hold-up on the legislation, now going on two weeks, occurs because the Colorado House and Senate passed slightly different versions of SB-21-079.

The Senate did not concur on House amendments but instead requested that the House join them in naming conferees for a conference committee. The conference committee met

for the first time Monday and will offer a report today on the Senate Floor.

The House amendments that produced the hang-up involve only 15 lines in the five-page bill. In three lines, the amendment adds Elk to the long list of animals covered by the deregulation bill. The final 12 lines are more significant involving disclaimer policies.

The bill itself is a deregulatory policy, providing for direct sales to consumers by farmers and ranchers,

SB-21-079 allows a person to sell without licenses or inspections certain animals or animal shares without oversight by public health agencies. The disclaimer requirements.

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## **Biden Administration Budget Request Gives Boost to Agriculture Funding**

*(From Forbes)*

The Biden Administration's [discretionary budget request](#) gave agriculture a big step up in funding. Friday's request called for a 16% increase from the 2021 enacted level, a jump of \$3.8 billion to \$27.8 billion.

Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, stated that the discretionary budget would expand broadband access; provide more funds for agricultural research, extension and outreach programs; would address wildfires by providing more money for forest management; and would increase the funding for the [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#).

"This is our moment to solve big challenges by acting boldly-to close the broadband gap facing rural America; to work with farmers, ranchers and producers to transform our nation's food system and build new markets here and abroad; to protect and manage our nation's forests and grasslands from catastrophic wildfires; and to ensure Americans have access to healthy and nutritious food," [said Vilsack](#), who will appear at an online hearing on Wednesday with the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. "The President's budget commits to building back better and USDA is at heart of that historic commitment."

The request was part of a \$118 billion increase in domestic spending. Civilian agencies [would receive an overall 16% increase in funding](#), to \$769 billion, while defense spending would rise by less than 2%, to \$753 billion.

Rural broadband has been promoted greatly by the past two presidential administrations. According to the USDA, rural Americans are more than 10 times likelier than urban residents to lack access to quality broadband. Biden's request would provide an increase of \$65 million over the 2021 enacted level for the [Rural e-Connectivity Program "Reconnect."](#) which provides grants and loans to deploy broadband to unserved areas.

Read [more](#).

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## **Vilsack Cancels Food Box Program, Citing Cost, Inefficiencies**

*(From AgriPulse)*

The Agriculture Department is ending the Farmers to Families Food Box program and shifting to more effective ways of delivering fresh produce and dairy products, says Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

May will be the last month of the program.

"We're going to continue to provide healthy food, but we're going to do it through the most efficient system that we have," including food banks and a new Dairy Donation Program authorized by Congress, Vilsack told the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Wednesday.

The Trump administration launched the program last year in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdowns that shut down the hospitality and food service markets. About 157 million boxes have been delivered so far, with existing contracts ending this month.

But Vilsack said that there were significant disparities in administrative costs, and “in some cases, people were charged a tremendous amount just to fill the boxes.”

According to USDA, the average price of a box fluctuated from as low as \$28 to as high as \$105, and distribution costs and the content of boxes varied from place to place.

There was also “an inadequate accounting of where the boxes were actually delivered,” Vilsack said. “There was a lot of food waste and loss that we uncovered” during listening sessions USDA held.

To partly replace the Food Box program, USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service announced on Monday that it would be expanding offerings under the Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, to include fruit and vegetable boxes. Vilsack described the food bank system as “incredibly efficient and incredibly effective at getting resources out to folks.”

On Tuesday, AMS formally informed dairy producers and processors about ongoing plans for the Dairy Donation Program. The program will reimburse processors for contributions of dairy products to nonprofit organizations that distribute to the needy.

"We're going to try to take ... what we've learned about the best of that (Food Box) program and incorporate it into our traditional, regular programs, which are very efficient in terms of food distribution, so that way I think you get the best of both worlds," Vilsack said. "You get product being used product being available to people, nutritious product being available, but you get it through a very efficient and effective delivery mechanism."

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## **USDA Grant Program Needed for Local Meat Processors**

*(From SoutheastAgNet)*

The Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA) recently submitted a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) urging them to open applications for a grant program to help local meat processors. The legislation, authorized by Congress in December, set funding aside to improve capacity at local meat lockers, but CFRA says the agency has been slow to respond.

In a letter to the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, the Center asks that applications be made available soon as possible and that processors designated as "smaller" and "very small" receive preference.

"Many of us have changed the way we purchase and prepare our food over the past 12 months," said Johnathan Hladik, policy director for the Center for Rural Affairs. "Families now spend more time cooking at home. We are learning that local meat provides a better and more affordable alternative to the big box store."

While the surge in demand has created a good problem for local meat lockers, Hladik said many of the facilities simply do not have space or equipment to keep up, leaving family farms in the growing direct sales industry without a crucial partner.

In the letter, CFRA also asks USDA leadership to prioritize supporting small meat processors looking to improve and expand their infrastructure, which Hladik said is vital in addressing bottlenecks in local processing and encouraging the growth of rural economies, as well as make funding available to entrepreneurs seeking to open a new small facility.

Additionally, they support USDA implementing grants of up to \$500,000 to cover the costs of such expansion efforts.

[Source.](#)

## Funding Opportunities:

### Conservation Innovation Grants in Montana

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for grants to fund Montana projects that could stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

[Conservation Innovation Grants](#) (CIG) generally fund pilot projects, field demonstrations, and on-farm conservation research. In Montana, \$225,000 is available for the state-component CIG. Applicants can request up to \$75,000 for projects lasting one to three years. Resource concerns identified for this program are soil health, water quality and quantity, and range health.

Applications are due by April 23, 2021.

### California Conservation Innovation Grant

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting proposals for [Conservation Innovation Grants \(CIG\) in California](#) to help support the adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches on agricultural, forest lands, and oak woodlands. The CIG program this year prioritizes focusing on development and demonstration of innovative technologies related to resource inventory, treatment guidelines, quantifying benefits of soil health, carbon sequestration, pollinator and wildlife habitat, fuel management, air and water quality on agricultural lands, forest, and oak woodlands.

Additionally, the CIG program includes funding for development of methods to encourage agricultural producers to adopt soil health practices and better equip historically underserved specialty crop farmers to implement irrigation and nutrient management. NRCS will invest up to \$1 million for on-farm trials, field demonstrations, and pilot projects in 2021.

Proposals are due by April 23, 2021.

### Conservation Innovation Grants in Massachusetts

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced up to \$200,000 of funding available in Massachusetts for eligible individuals, local and state governments, non-governmental organizations, and tribes through Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). These grants are intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection. CIG recipients must provide a non-federal funding match at least equal to the amount of federal funding requested.

The proposal must involve Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) eligible producers and should demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource concern in one of the following categories: water quality, silvopasture, wildlife habitat.

Applications are due by April 23, 2021.

Read [more](#).

### Conservation Innovation Grants in Idaho

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Idaho has announced the availability of [Conservation Innovation Grant](#) (CIG) funding. The purpose of these grants is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and

technologies. Up to \$150,000 total is available, with maximum project funding of \$75,000 and an application minimum of \$25,000.

Applications for all resource concerns will be considered by Idaho. These include Rangeland, Wildlife, Soil Health and any other categories that relate to NRCS conservation priorities. No special consideration for funding will be given to applications that relate to any designated priorities.

Proposals must be received by May 3, 2021.

## Value-Added Producer Grants (Amended Notice)


USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service has amended its Solicitation of Applications for approximately \$76 million in matching funds through the [Value-Added Producer Grant](#) program. The following are eligible types of applicants: Independent Producer, Agricultural Producer Group, Farmer or Rancher Cooperative, or Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business. Grant and matching funds can be used for planning activities or for working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product. The planning grant maximum is \$75,000 and the maximum for Working Capital Grants is \$250,000.

The Amended Notice for this program includes \$35 million in COVID-19 relief funds that require a reduced cost share match of just 10% of the grant amount, rather than the 100% match required by the remainder of the funds.

Electronic applications must be received by April 29, 2021; paper applications must be postmarked by May 4, 2021.

Read [more](#).

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## Save the Date!

- 6/11/2021 - Montana/Western Bison Association Summer Conference - MT
- 6/27 - 29/2021 - National Bison Assn. Summer Conference - Cheyenne, WY

Please visit <https://bisoncentral.com/calendar/> for details and more up-to-date events. If you have a bison event coming up that's not listed, please send the details to [jim@bisoncentral.com](mailto:jim@bisoncentral.com) and the NBA will post the event on its website at no charge.

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[Click Here for NBA Calendar of Events](#)

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