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## Weekly Update



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

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### *NBA Weekly Update for May 26, 2023*

*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.*



eligibility in appropriate programs, and support programs that will benefit American bison producers. Said Matheson, "We also educated our friends in Washington about the potential need for support to develop and disseminate the pending Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) vaccine, to which they were receptive and lent tentative support."

The team also lobbied for the Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act, which has been introduced in the Senate with a companion bill in the House being finalized with introduction to occur as soon as next week. We explained the continued need for legislation to protect bison producers from deceptive labeling tactics, particularly that of labeling water buffalo as simply "buffalo" and substituting water buffalo for bison. This week's meetings will help to finalize our lead House sponsors and get the bill introduced soon. The NBA also lobbied to include the legislation in the 2023 Farm Bill, as the most efficient route to finalize this rule change.

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## **InterTribal Buffalo Council Unveils new Cultural Harvesting Trailer!**

NBA Regional Director Mortiz Espy and At Large Director Mimi Hillenbrand joined ITBC on May 24 for the reveal of their cultural harvesting trailer in Rapid City, SD. The cultural harvesting trailer built by Sentinel Trailers is designed to go out into fields to assist people who are harvesting buffalo. The trailer includes a water tank, an instant hot water heater, three inches of insulation on all sides, and a refrigeration compartment with a rail that can hold up to six buffalos at once.

"The objective of the trailer is to make it easier for people to harvest every part of the animal, without having to take it to town," said ITBC Director Troy Heinert.

The trailer was carefully designed to meet FDA standards and serves as a way for the Lakota people to reconnect with their ancestral ways of living.

"Well, it's important for a couple of reasons. One is we want to make sure that food safety standards are followed as we distribute meat. The other thing is just to reconnect with buffalo and reconnect with processing the way we used to," continued Heinert.

After noticing there was a need for more affordable and transportable ways of harvesting livestock, Sentinel Trailers constructed this trailer to provide a solution.

"The biggest thing is we saw that there was a need for these butchers to get these animals to their butcher shop. A lot of the butcher shops are getting surrounded by the city, and so they can't kill them on their premises, and so we saw the need and we started from the ground up," said Robert Skousen, owner of Sentinel Trailers.

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777 Bison is hosting an intense 1 Day course on Introduction to Holistic Management at the ranch, instructed by Liz Riffle of Riffle Farms, <https://www.rifflefarms.com>. We are looking for attendees who have an interest in applying holistic principles to their operation and have not attended a holistic management course before. Each attendee will be provided all course materials. Please contact Moritz Espy at 605 430 7471 to sign up.

A promotional graphic for 777 Bison Ranch. The background is a sunset over a grassy field with a bison silhouette. The text 'Restoring the native plains one bison and one acre at a time.' is at the top, followed by 'Healthy Land | Healthy Animals | Healthy People | Healthy Planet'. The main text reads '1 DAY HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT COURSE - JUNE 16 FREE FOR NBA MEMBERS'. The 777 Bison Ranch logo is on the left, and a row of certification logos (VERIFIED, American Grassfed, GLOBAL ANIMAL, Audubon CERTIFIED, PARTNER) is on the right.

Restoring the native plains one bison and one acre at a time.  
Healthy Land | Healthy Animals | Healthy People | Healthy Planet

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***Editor's Note: The following news stories were distributed by organizations not affiliated with the National Bison Association. They may not reflect the opinions or the positions held by the NBA on matters such as genetic integrity, animal management, and other issues.***

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## Regional bison conference being held June 17 at 777 Bison Ranch near Hermosa

By Jody Heemstra  
DRG News (SD)  
May 26, 2023

The National Bison Association (NBA), in cooperation with 777 Bison Ranch and the Dakota Territories Buffalo Association, will hold its first of three regional summer conferences in 2023. The setting for this event will be the beautiful 777 Bison Ranch near Hermosa, South Dakota, on Saturday June 17th.

"Mark your calendars and plan to join the NBA, in cooperation with the Dakota Territory Buffalo Association, on June 17th at the 777 Bison Ranch in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The 777 team is graciously opening up their bison operation to NBA and DTBA members for the first of the NBA's 2023 regional summer/fall conferences. This is a great opportunity to tour one of the premier bison operations in the US today, tour their well-managed herd and see first-hand the results of over 30 years of holistic land management," shared NBA President Chad Kremer.

The field day will on the prairie where the Hillenbrand family has been raising bison for over 30 years. It is located in southwestern South Dakota, where the landscape is comprised of mixed, short grass prairie. The 777 Bison Ranch raises its animals holistically, sustainably, and humanely. It has a strong belief to care for the land, plants, and the wildlife in the same manner. It plans for the whole, using Holistic Management, which has helped set its goals and achieve them.

Leaders in holistic management and bison restoration from across the continent are scheduled to present, including Liz Riffle, Glenn Plumb, and Cody Smith. The event will lead with gathering at the host hotel, the Ramkota, in Rapid City, South Dakota Friday night. All day Saturday will be ranch time, featuring field sessions that will cover an array of topics including how to utilize bison as a tool in regenerating healthy soils and grasslands, while sequestering carbon and adding value to your farm or ranch. Registration is currently open for this event, and is only \$150/ person and includes all meals. Please register online at – <https://bisoncentral.com/nba-conferences/>.

"We have a great lineup of expert speakers addressing pertinent bison topics, ranging from handling to holistic management to species restoration, – weather permitting – live in the field, concluding with a bison BBQ at the 777 Ranch! We'll also have a great bison gathering and networking event the previous evening at the host-hotel, the Rapid City Ramkota, with dinner and a fundraiser. Don't miss out on this unique bison opportunity!" said NBA Executive Director, Jim Matheson.

[Source.](#)

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## **Bison Meat Is Hot. Ranchers Are Struggling to Keep Up.**

Mother Jones

By Lela Nargi

May 26, 2023

Once a month, Adam Ulbricht hosts a lively podcast called *The Bison Insider*. Ulbricht, who's also executive director of the Minnesota Bison Association, discusses weaning calves, the pros and cons of small ranches, and field harvesting. A favorite topic: the rebound of the bison market after a brief Covid slump. Between 2021 to 2022, bison meat production ticked up by 8.5 percent. "We're processing more animals than we ever have, and that's to meet a demand," Ulbricht says, from restaurants, from direct-to-consumer sales, from a snack industry gung-ho about bison jerky. More bison could also feed American troops; the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act, passed this past June, included an amendment introduced by Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), stipulating that the Pentagon aim to buy 2 million pounds of bison meat a year from Tribal producers. "The voices that I talk to regularly believe that by 2024 we're very likely looking at a shortage of animals," Ulbricht says.

Currently, there are some 350,000 head of bison in US herds, around 20,000 of which are managed by tribes for whom the animals are culturally and economically significant. Many ecologists would also like to see these numbers climb. "I think it would be good for the environment," says Matthew Moran, an emeritus biology professor at Hendrix College in Arkansas who studied the conservation herd at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve in Kansas. That's because bison function as "ecosystem engineers," boosting biodiversity.

Left to their own devices, bison graze in patches, creating grass outcroppings of varying heights that are home to a host of bird species. Their wallowing makes muddy puddles that support other insects and animals. In this way they help revive and maintain the health of grasslands, which store one-third of global terrestrial carbon stocks.

But that only works, says Troy Heinert, executive director of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, an organization representing the interests of Native ranchers, if the animals are allowed to choose, as much as possible, where to roam and what to graze. Moving bison in an intensive rotational system like is done with some cattle, where paddocks rest and recover between bouts of munching, prevents the overgrazing that results in soil erosion and compaction; some studies show this practice has similar land benefits for both species—though bison emit less of the potent greenhouse gas methane.

Yet in most parts of the country, it's hard to maintain year-round grazing. For this reason, many bison producers—both Native and non-Native—finish animals on grain for 2 to 3 months before slaughter, which can detract from the ungulates' overall environmental benefits. Additionally, the grain that's used for finishing—largely corn and soy—requires heavy water usage and causes fertilizer pollution and loss of ecosystems as land is converted to crop fields.

Still, with enough viable land and sound management, bison producers could theoretically raise more meat and keep the eco-benefits. Hila Shamon, a research ecologist with Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute calls out the ranchers at Diamond 4D Ranch in Choteau, Montana. Under the guidance of manager Chris Bechtold, they use a rotational system where "instead of pushing [bison] from one area to another, they open up the gates to the next pasture and give them the choice to either stay or move to the next pasture." This creates species-rich heterogeneity as the animals

nibble grasses into those patches of differing heights.

[Read more.](#)

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## **A Yellowstone visitor tried to help a struggling bison calf. It had to be euthanized**

From The LA Times

Yellowstone National Park staff had to euthanize a newborn bison calf after a park visitor tried to help the struggling animal near a riverbank but caused the herd to reject it, officials said.

After being abandoned, the calf had to be put down because it posed a danger by approaching cars and people on the roadways, the National Park Service said in a statement Tuesday.

"Approaching wild animals can drastically affect their well-being and, in this case, their survival," the park service said.

According to the park service, the calf became separated from its mother Saturday evening when the herd crossed the Lamar River near its confluence with Soda Butte Creek.

A park visitor "intentionally disturbed the calf" by pushing it from the river and onto the roadway, the park service said. The incident is under investigation, officials said.

Visitors later observed the calf walk up to and follow cars and people, which can be hazardous both for animals and humans.

"Interference by people can cause wildlife to reject their offspring," the park service said. "In this case, park rangers tried repeatedly to reunite the calf with the herd. These efforts failed."

[Read more.](#)

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## **Bison population, with Yellowstone National Park roots, explodes in Colorado**

From CBS - Colorado

In 2015 researchers at Colorado State University, in conjunction with the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County, released a small herd of bison onto the 2,700-acre Soapstone Prairie north of Fort Collins. The herd originally included just 10 bison, but thanks to advanced assisted reproductive technologies at CSU, the herd has grown significantly and has been kept as close to genetically pure as possible and free of brucellosis.

"They do a lot of natural breeding, but those assisted reproductive technologies help us build a herd that is healthy and free of brucellosis," said Dr. Jennifer Barfield.

What makes these bison special is that they have lineage to the bison in Yellowstone National Park. CSU and its partners are now sending bison to Native American tribes enabling them to use the bison for cultural endeavors, food sovereignty and the ability to start their own herd.

"It feels very rewarding to be able to rehome these bison with tribes," added Barfield.

"From my point of view something like this is really important so we get to know back ourselves again, and take these animals back to their place, and where our people can get to know about themselves again," said Darryl Slim of the Dine' Nation.

"There is a lot of cultural importance," adds Matt McCollum one of CSU's head researchers and herd coordinator.

In April the Oglala Lakota tribe traveled to CSU from South Dakota to transfer bison to their new home on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

[Read more.](#)

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## **Supreme Court strikes down Biden WOTUS regulation**

Meatingplace.com

[In a 5-4 ruling](#), the U.S. Supreme Court has limited the scope of the Clean Water Act, and effectively ended a multi-month standoff between the White House and various levels of government over WOTUS regulations.

The case, *Sackett v. EPA*, concerned the Idaho property of Michael and Chantell Sackett, who in 2007 backfilled their lot with dirt to prepare for new home construction. Because the Sackett's property contained a wetland that fed into an intrastate lake – and was thus, according to the EPA, part of "waters of the United States," or WOTUS, regulations – the agency ordered the couple to remove the backfill and restore the site, or face penalties.

[The Sacketts sued the EPA](#), and although the Ninth Circuit sided with the agency (and ruled that the Clean Water Act covers wetlands with an "ecologically significant nexus to traditional navigable waters"), the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case in early 2022, and arguments were given on Oct. 3, 2022.

Writing for the majority, Justice Alito reversed the Ninth Circuit's ruling, and effectively limited the EPA's authority over wetlands. Alito wrote that going forward, the Clean Water Act will cover to "only those 'wetlands with a continuous surface connection to bodies that are waters of the United States in their own right,' so that they are 'indistinguishable' from those waters. ... The wetlands on the Sacketts' property are distinguishable from any possibly covered waters."

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## **WBSCM Trainings for Current Domestic Vendors**

USDA Ag Marketing Service

May 26, 2023

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is providing current Domestic Commodity Vendors in the Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) System on-line training sessions on the following topics; "How to Submit an Offer," "Entering an Advanced Shipping Notice (ASN)," and "Submitting an eInvoice." These training sessions will be instructor led and conducted live via Zoom.

Please register at the link provided for each training;

- June 20, 2023, 1:00pm – 3:00pm ET – [How to Submit a Bid.](#)
- June 21, 2023, 1:00pm – 3:00pm ET – [Entering an ASN.](#)
- June 22, 2023, 1:00pm – 3:00pm ET – [Submitting an eInvoice.](#)

Prior to the training date, an email invite will be sent to all registered vendors with instructions on how to access the training sessions.

For more information, contact [WBSCMAMSHelpDesk@usda.gov](mailto:WBSCMAMSHelpDesk@usda.gov).

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## **NRCS Delivering Climate Solutions through the Inflation Reduction Act**

By Terry J. Cosby, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA-NRCS Gov Delivery

May 23, 2023

The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) of 2022 represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. It provides \$19.5 billion from fiscal years

2023 to 2027 for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements. Last February, NRCS announced it was making \$850 million of those funds available in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs – the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). NRCS is well on its way to implementing IRA in fiscal year 2023, and we're planning for 2024 and beyond. In past years, producer demand for conservation assistance through these programs has outpaced available funding. We're excited that many producers can now benefit from this additional funding, and we're preparing for the additional help they will need to implement these climate change mitigation practices.

Locally, we're getting funding out to individual producers, and we're improving and streamlining programs to make it easier to sign up.

- So far in fiscal year (FY) 2023, NRCS is ahead of historical rates in obligating financial assistance for conservation programs and has obligated more than 19,500 contracts, compared to an average of just over 12,000 at this same time over the last 4 years.
- Since announcing the availability of FY 2023 IRA funds in February, we have had over 10,000 applications for IRA in EQIP and CSP—and that number is growing every day. We're currently receiving an average of 29 IRA applications per hour for CSP and EQIP combined.

Producers need to know that NRCS accepts applications for our conservation programs year-round. And, no matter when they apply, their application will automatically carry over for consideration in future funding cycles. We encourage producers to apply now so that they can take advantage of this opportunity for additional funding over the next few years. To receive consideration for the current funding cycle in FY23, producers should apply by their [state's program ranking dates](#).

[Read more.](#)

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## **Producers Have Until May 31 to Respond to the Census of Agriculture!**

USDA Gov Delivery  
May 24, 2023

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is letting producers know they have just [one more week to return their 2022 ag census form](#). Data collection will officially end on Wednesday, May 31, so there is still time to respond, either by mail or online at [agcounts.usda.gov](https://agcounts.usda.gov). Landowners who lease land to producers, those solely involved in conservation programs, and even those who may not have farmed in 2022 are still required to respond. Producers who received the ag census but do not fit the definition of a farm, are no longer farming, never farmed, or have another update for NASS should write their status on the form and mail it back. Every response matters!

Ag census data are used by agribusinesses, educators, researchers, federal and local government, and many others when making decisions about farm programs, loans, insurance, rural development, disaster assistance, and more. Not responding means not being represented in these widely used data, and therefore risk being underserved. For assistance filling out the ag census, recipients can call 888-424-7828. NASS will release the ag census data in early 2024.

[Read more.](#)

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## **USDA set to launch \$3.7B in natural disaster relief assistance**

From Meatingplace.com

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently unveiled a program that will provide \$3.7 billion in financial assistance to crop and livestock producers who sustained losses in natural disaster events in 2022.



The Emergency Relief Program (ERP) and Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) are successor programs to similar efforts launched in 2021. Qualifying ag producers affected by such natural disaster events as megadrought, Hurricane Ian, epic flooding and catastrophic wildfires during 2022 will be able to apply for the financial support from USDA in the coming months, the agency said in a news release. Both crop and livestock producers should be prepared to have specific forms on file with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and those who are unsure whether they have the required forms on file should contact their local FSA office, USDA said in a news release.

The initial funding is covered under the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023, which was signed into law in December 2022. The Act specifically sets up to \$500 million to livestock producers for losses incurred during drought or wildfires during the calendar year 2022.

"To say these events were costly is an understatement," Vilsack noted. "We are designing payment factors that ensure the fair, equitable and efficient delivery of program benefits to help as many producers as possible," he added.

[Read More.](#)

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## **NRCS Delivering Climate Solutions through the Inflation Reduction Act**

USDA Gov Delivery

May 25, 2023

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. It provides \$19.5 billion from fiscal years 2023 to 2027 for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) implements. Last February, NRCS announced it was making \$850 million of those funds available in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs – the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

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[Read more.](#)

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## **How Tribal Hunters Became the Scapegoat for Yellowstone's Bison 'Slaughter'**

Huffington Post

By Roque Planas

May 21, 2023

Every winter for the last decade, Andrew Wildbill has driven 12 hours from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation to lead a bison hunting party on the northern border of Yellowstone National Park. It's a hit-or-miss hunt, dictated by the weather. Last year, it didn't snow enough to push the animals north in search of forage, to where they could be legally hunted.

"We didn't come home with anything," said Wildbill, who serves as the reservation's wildlife program manager. "But it's always great just to return to where your ancestors went on an annual basis."

This year was different. After back-to-back mild winters, the park's bison population had ballooned to 6,000. When snow hit early, then kept piling up into the spring, bison streamed toward the park's northern border. The result was the most successful hunt in

more than a century, with tribal hunters taking home nearly 1,200 bison.

"Being able to provide bison back into our communities is great," Wildbill said. "These foods are vital to our ceremonies.... These foods are celebrated. This hunt gives us that opportunity as Indian people to continue that relationship that was absent for over a century."

[Read more.](#)

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## Conservation Innovation Grants in South Carolina

Applications are due by June 5, 2023.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in South Carolina is accepting applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) State Program funding to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. A total of \$500,000 is available for the South Carolina CIG competition in FY 2023. Non-federal entities and individuals are invited to apply. Projects may be between one and three years in duration, and the maximum award amount for a single award in FY 2023 is \$250,000. State priorities for projects are water quality, soil health, air quality, and climate-smart agriculture and forestry.

[Read more.](#)

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# farm crisis center

Even in the best of times, farming can be an incredibly high-stress occupation. Unpredictable weather, crop disease, volatile markets, heavy workloads, and social isolation are just a handful of the challenges that farmers may face.

These conditions force many family farmers and ranchers to make tough financial decisions that will impact their families, communities, and the entire country.

National Farmers Union compiled resources to help farmers through stressful times. Find them at:

<https://farmcrisis.nfu.org/>

**National Suicide Hotline - 800-273-TALK (8255)**

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### ***Save the Date!***

- 6/09/2023 - Texas Bison Assn. Spring Conference - Waco, TX
- 6/16/2023 - NBA Regional Conference - Rapid City, SD
- 6/16/2023 - Montana Bison Association Summer Meeting - MT
- 6/21/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 6/24/2023 - NBA Regenerative Ranching Field Day - Thornville, OH
- 7/09/2023 - NBA Regenerative Ranching Field Day - Sleepy Eye, MN
- 7/15/2023 - NBA Regional Conference - New Plymouth, ID
- 8/9/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 9/13/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 9/29/2023 - Eastern Bison Association Fall Conference - Varysburg, NY
- 9/30/2023 - NBA Regenerative Ranching Field Day - Baldwin, WI
- 10/7/2023 - NBA Regional Conference - Terra Alta, WV
- 10/13/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 11/8/2023 - Antelope Island State Park Production Auction - Webcast
- 11/10/2023 - Illinois Indiana Bison Association Fall Conference - Roanoke, IN
- 11/10/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 12/6/2023 - Jack Auction Group Video Auction - Online
- 1/1/2024 - Prairie Legends Bison Auction - Webcast

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.

**Click Here for NBA Calendar of  
Events**

National Bison Association | [info@bisoncentral.com](mailto:info@bisoncentral.com) | 303-292-2833 | [@nationalbison](https://bisoncentral.com)



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