



## National Bison Association

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### Weekly Update from the National Bison Association

A news and update service *exclusively* for members of the National Bison Association.

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**January 27, 2017**

## Huge Turnout, High Enthusiasm at Winter Conference

With a huge crowd testing the capacity of the Denver Renaissance Hotel's banquet facilities, nearly 500 bison ranchers, marketers and enthusiasts gathered last week to celebrate the strong growth and bright future for the bison business.

Gathering under the theme of Star Spangled Bison, the conference attendees celebrated the animal's enshrinement as the National Mammal last year. A heavy turnout of bison newcomers at the meeting were welcomed by long-time producers and mentors.

The program focused heavily on bison production fundamentals, with a morning-long Mentors' Panel provided information about the market fundamentals, bison handling, herd health issues, pasture management, and other topics. Speakers in the afternoon dug into many of those topics in greater depth, focusing on stress factors in bison, implications of GMO feed, new development in on-ranch feeding, and building healthy soils.

Attorney Karen Budd-Falen addressed the conference on private property rights Wednesday afternoon, and Canadian Bison Association Director Terry Kremeniuk addressed the Friday session.

"The energy and enthusiasm at last week's conference was electric," said NBA Executive Director Dave Carter.

"The turnout of newcomers was very encouraging," Carter added. "And "And, it's particularly rewarding to see how those newcomers are welcomed into the bison family by our long-time members.

A free-wheeling evening on Thursday night generated more than \$38,000 for the NBA and its two affiliated foundations during the benefit auction. The National Buffalo Foundation and Throlson American Bison Foundations also welcomed conference attendees with an opening reception Wednesday evening.

The conference wrapped up with 490 members and guests enjoying a formal banquet and the GTSS awards presentation. Carter was honored at the closing banquet for his 15 years of service in that position.

Carter and Assistant Director Jim Matheson thank the Winter Conference Committee for their hard work in planning the successful event. That committee consists of Beverly Brown of Texas (chair) Amy Eudy of Texas, Deb Thieman of Colorado, Christine Hung of Montana, Kim Zimmerman of California, Susan Maass of Colorado, John Graves of Colorado, and Roy Liedtke of Texas.

Winter Conference Survey Out – Please Participate by Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **GTSS Auctions 100 Plus Head**

Strong prices prevailed at the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary Gold Trophy Show and Sale at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, as buyers vied for the nearly 100 head offered for sale by 19 ranches located across the United States and Canada.

The Grand Champion bull, a Yearling Bull brought by Bison Spirit Ranch of Oak Lake, Manitoba, brought \$36,000 at Saturday's sale. The Grand Champion Female, a yearling heifer consigned by Buffalo Run Ranch from Kamas, UT, sold for \$6,700.

Average prices were up in nearly every category this year. A full listing of the GTSS results is available in the producers' section of [www.bisoncentral.com](http://www.bisoncentral.com).

## **Gerald Parsons named NBA Member of the Year**

Gerald Parsons, NBA Board member and chair of the North American Bison Registry, was honored during the 2017 winter conference as the Association's Member of the Year.

Parsons was selected by the Past Presidents' Council, for his dedication to assisting anyone that cares for bison, his longtime leadership in promoting youth education, and his commitment to the care and stewardship of the animal.

Parsons helped found the NBA Junior Judging Program, which completed its 8<sup>th</sup> year at the National Western Stock Show last week.

The Member of the Year is designated each year by the past presidents' Council for a pool of nominees submitted by individual members.

## **NBA Officers Reelected, Bylaws Changes Adopted.**

Members at the National Bison Association general membership meeting re-elected Roy Liedtke of Texas as the association's president. And returned to office Dick Gehring of Kansas as vice president, Karen Conley of South Dakota as secretary-treasurer, and Jason Moore of Indiana as Director as Large.

Members at the annual meeting also unanimously adopted a series of bylaws changes that have been developed over the past two years. Those proposed changes were reviewed in depth at the 2016 annual meeting.

As the board of directors met Friday afternoon, Mimi Hillenbrand of South Dakota replaced Dave Hunter of Montana as the Director for Region III, which represents Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Hillenbrand was elected to that position Last September after Hunter declined to run for re-election.

Hunter was recognized for his service at the Friday banquet.

## **Thank You, Conference and GTSS Sponsors**

Bison marketers, individual members, and industry supporters stepped up with major financial support for the NBA Winter Conference this year, providing \$16,500 in cash sponsorships for the conference, a roughly equal amount of in-kind donations of bison meat, and \$17,000 in cash sponsorships for the Gold Trophy Show and Sale.

Rocky Mountain Natural Meats again sponsored the Friday banquet, providing bone-in strip steaks for the 490 attendees. Thursday's banquet, featuring bison filets, was sponsored by Frontiere Natural Meats. The Golden Bison family of High Plains Bison and Carmen Creek Bison, along with Lorentz natural Meats, sponsored Thursday's slider contest luncheon. And, Wednesday's luncheon was again sponsored by Continental Sausage Co.

The Fort Restaurant in Morrison, CO sponsored the entertainment throughout the conference, which included Eric "Many Winds" Herrera, Voices West Select, and the Beverly Belles.

Durham Ranch sponsored the conference bags, Western Buffalo Co. Sponsored the hotel key cards, All American Pet Proteins sponsored the coffee breaks, Black Kettle Buffalo Co. sponsored the beverages, and Northstar Bison sponsored the conference lanyards.

Several other bison businesses provided cash sponsorships for the conference.

The Gold Trophy Show and Sale this year was again presented by Kroger and Simple Truth Bison brand. Many bison ranches and marketers sponsored the individual trophies.

Jim Matheson, NBA assistant director, said, "the Support provided by our conference sponsors is a critical piece in helping us provide our attendees with a quality program at an affordable price. We appreciate all of their financial and in-kind support."

## **Keep Winter Conference Momentum Going with Bison World Advertising**

Capitalize on the contacts you made during the NBA winter conference and jump ahead in reaching out to enthusiastic conference goers by advertising your animals or bison-related goods and services in Bison World. This beautiful, full-color glossy magazine is THE very best way to reach the nation's most influential producers and potential producers. Ads start at \$100 per issue for members who commit to advertise in four issues. The deadline to reserve space in

the spring issue is Feb. 10. For more information, contact Bison World Editor & Advertising Manager Marilyn Drake at [marilynbaydrake@gmail.com](mailto:marilynbaydrake@gmail.com) or 303-292-2833, ext. 301.

## **Jr. Judging Contest Winners Announced**

## **New NBA Website Launched**

If you haven't logged on to [www.bisoncentral.com](http://www.bisoncentral.com) in a while, you're in for a real surprise. The association's all-new website "went live" last week during the NBA winter conference.

The new site is designed to be more visually appealing and easier to navigate. The home page features a rotating carousel of bison and bison meat photos, along with four distinct headings that will help users navigate easily to information on production and marketing, general bison information, and bison nutrition and cooking. Another section will house information exclusively for NBA members.

And, the new website is designed to adapt for hand-held and mobile devices.

Jim Matheson, assistant director, said, "We have been working with the designers for most of the past year to create this new website. We want our members, and the public to be able to find whatever information they need with just a couple of clicks."

Matheson noted that the membership director and buyers' guide are a key part of the website. All NBA members are encouraged to go to the members' area to enter and update their membership information.

"This will be a self-populating area of the website," Matheson said. "We want our members to be able to list not only their contact information, but also the products and services they provide."

## **Idaho Legislature Moving to Eliminate Branding Requirement for Canadian Bison**

Legislation moving through the Idaho Statehouse would make permanent the temporary regulation that eliminates the rule requiring that bison brought into the state carry the CAN brand.

In 2015, the USDA and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency issued a new directive that eliminated the requirement for branding of bison brought into the United States from Canada, as long as those animals had other authorized identification.

However, some states, including Idaho, had rules that will required branding.

Last year, Dr. Bill Barton, Idaho's State Veterinarian, issued a temporary regulation eliminating that requirement.

Earlier this week, the Idaho Senate, passed a bill dropping that requirement. And, the House Agriculture Affairs Committee unanimously endorsed the bill with a "do pass" recommendation.

## **New Committees Finalized in the Senate and House**

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND), who championed the legislation designating bison as the national mammal last year, will take on new responsibilities in the upcoming Congress as he will name the chair of Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. That subcommittee is a key gatekeeper for funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) will continue as chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) will continue as the ranking minority member. At appropriations, U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) will continue as chair and U.S. Sen. Pat Leahy (D-VT) will continue as ranking minority member of both the full committee and the agriculture subcommittee.

In the House, U.S. Reps. Mike Conaway (R-TX) and Collin Peterson (D-MN) will continue as chair and ranking minority member, respectively. U.S. Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) will chair the full House Agriculture Appropriations Committee, with U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL) serving as chair of the agriculture subcommittee. On the Democratic side, U.S. Rep. Nita Lowery (R-NY) will serve as ranking member on the full committee, while U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA) will be the ranking minority member of the agriculture subcommittee.

\*\*\*\*\*Disclaimer\*\*\*\*\*

## **Montana Temporarily Blocks Bison Slaughters**

*(From Associated Press)*

[Montana](#) Gov. Steve Bullock has blocked for now the impending slaughter of hundreds of [Yellowstone National Park](#) bison over disease concerns until a temporary home can be found for 40 of the animals wanted by an American Indian tribe.

Bullock prohibited the transfer of any park bison to slaughter in a letter to the park obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press. The Jan. 19 letter was not previously publicized and invoked an executive order used by Bullock's predecessor, fellow Democrat [Brian Schweitzer](#), to stop slaughter shipments in 2011.

About 200 bison have been captured in recent weeks attempting to migrate from the park into Montana.

Federal and state officials aim to kill up to 1,300 bison this winter using hunting and shipments to slaughter. It's an attempt to drive down the size of the park's herds, which currently number about 5,500 animals.

The killings are carried out under a state-federal agreement meant to prevent the spread of the disease brucellosis from bison to livestock.

Last year, the park kept alive 40 captured bison for future relocation to northeast Montana's Fort Peck Indian Reservation — part of a faltering effort to establish new herds outside the park and reduce Yellowstone's annual slaughters.

Those plans stalled after state veterinarian Marty Zaluski said Montana law prohibits the animals from being moved outside the Yellowstone area, despite past relocations of park bison to Colorado for a federal research program.

Months or years of additional tests are needed to certify the animals are disease free, state livestock officials said Wednesday.

Read more. <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/apnewsbreak-montana-temporarily-blocks-bison-slaughters-45049789>

## **Savory Institute to Introduce Regenerative Ag marketing Label**

*(From Sustainable Food News)*

The [Savory Institute](#) on Wednesday introduced its new Land to Market verification program, which identifies and verifies food and clothing products made from regenerating soil. The Boulder, Colo.-based nonprofit has a goal to regenerate 2.5 billion acres of grasslands - about 20 percent of the world's grasslands - through holistic farm and ranch management programs by 2025. Today, about 33 percent of the world's land surface is grasslands and 70 percent of that has been degraded.

"Grasslands are critically important ecosystems that are key to reversing climate change," said Savory, which has a growing network of more than 30 hubs around the globe that work with producers to show them how to restore the natural cycles of grasslands through properly managed grazing.

"As livestock, such as cattle, bison, sheep and goats, produce manure and till the ground, grass flourishes, more carbon is removed from the atmosphere, and land managers can raise more nutrient-dense food," Savory said.

The new Land to Market program will allow consumers to buy food and clothing products derived from livestock that is properly managed through practices that are verified to enhance water availability, soil health, carbon sequestration, and wildlife habitats. Empirical data scientifically demonstrating these improvements will be used to verify a producer's acceptance into the Land to Market program.

"Currently, regenerative producers are unable to position their products advantageously and differentiate themselves in the market place. Additionally, there is no outcome based verification mechanism to back claims of regenerative land management," said Savory co-founder and CEO, Daniela Ibarra-Howell.

Savory said that the program "is not just another certification or label. There are many amazing programs in the marketplace that tell consumers if the products they are purchasing were grown without chemicals, or are GMO-free, or have high animal welfare standards. These certifications fill an important niche, but none of those programs tell us if our environment is getting better." Savory's Land to Market program is currently being prototyped in 10 hub regions with leading market partners such as [Epic Bar Provisions](#), [Maple Hill Creamery](#) and [White Oak Pastures](#), among others. White Oak is Georgia's largest organic farm, and [became an accredited hub of Savory](#) in December 2015.

The Land to Market program is expected to roll out across the Savory global network in 2018.

## **Bison, Pioneers of the Prairie, Return to Kankakee Sands**

*(From Cool Green Science)*

Over the past 20 years The Nature Conservancy in Indiana has been converting 6,700 acres of row-crop agriculture at Kankakee Sands into a diverse prairie. The goal – to [restore key prairie habitat and connectivity for wildlife](#).

ost plants and animals have been able to make it back on their own,” Ted Anchor the Northwest Indiana Program Director says. “Bison was one of those that we had to make a concerted effort to bring back and do it for all the right reasons.”

Bringing back these native grazers [restores interactions between plants, animals, and fire](#) – improving the diversity of ecosystems and biodiversity along with it.

In October of 2016, 23 bison from South Dakota were released on the prairie in Kankakee Sands

See the video at <http://blog.nature.org/science/2017/01/25/bison-pioneers-prairie-return-kankakee-sands-indiana/>

## **Another Steppe Bison Horn Found in Homer**

*(From the Homer, AK News)*

On a sunny winter day on Jan. 5, Holly and Jordin Keintz and their daughters Katie and Natalie hiked down to Diamond Creek to enjoy the remote beach at the bottom of a steep trail off the Sterling Highway near Diamond Ridge Road. They didn't expect to add more information to the story of Ice Age Homer.

About halfway between the bottom of the trail and the mouth of Diamond Creek, Holly Keintz looked down on the rocks and saw “this big chunk,” she said. Jordin said he walked right by it, thinking it a piece of driftwood, but Holly picked it up.

“At first we were thinking it was a walrus tusk, some kind of tooth,” she said.

“It was the biggest dinosaur tooth ever,” Jordin Keintz said, joking.

After doing some Web sleuthing, they realized that “tooth” came from a Pleistocene age mammal, the steppe bison.

“There was one little picture of a steppe bison (on the Web). I was, oh my gosh, that's a horn,” Holly Keintz said.

More Web searching led them to Janet Klein, a Homer historian who with geologist Dick Reger has been tracking and writing about Pleistocene bones. Last Thursday, Klein met with the Keintzes at the Homer News.

Another Ice Age-bone discoverer, A.J. Weber, dropped by with a steppe bison horn and skull fragment he found while gold panning at Diamond Creek in 2012, just upstream from where Holly Keintz found her bison horn.

Weber and Keintz put their horns side by side on a table. Weber had a left horn and Keintz a right horn. Each measured about 14 inches around at the thickest part. Radiocarbon dating done on Weber's horn showed it to be at least 43,500 years old.

"I wouldn't doubt it to be the same one," Weber said.

Absent skull fragments that could connect the two horns, it would take DNA testing to prove they came from the same animal. But right and left horns about the same size and found nearby suggests that they could be from the same ancient animal that once wandered an ice-free area of the Kenai Peninsula.

Read more at: <http://homernews.com/news/2017-01-19/another-steppe-bison-horn-found-homer>

## **Agency Moves to Transfer Bison Range to Tribes**

*(From the Lake County Leader)*

Two days before the official end of Barack Obama's presidency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it was initiating an environmental review to consider returning the National Bison Reserve to the Flathead Indian Reservation.

In its announcement, Jan. 18, the agency selected the proposal as its preferred alternative in the review process, the first time it has explicitly endorsed the idea.

Although the proposal is not a new one, the federal wildlife agency reignited controversy when it announced last March that it had begun discussions with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes about the possibility of restoring the 18,766-acre wildlife refuge to tribal authority.

For years, the tribes have advocated for a return of the lands, which were unilaterally removed from the reservation by Congress in 1908 to create a wildlife refuge for American Bison, which were then teetering on the brink of extinction. The tribes successfully sued the federal government decades later — winning a judgment that they had been under-paid for the land — but have consistently maintained that the refuge's creation was a violation of tribal sovereignty.

Located near Moiese, the Bison Range is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System managed by the federal wildlife agency and is currently home to a herd of 300 to 400 bison.

The Fish and Wildlife Service's preferred alternative "returns to the tribe control of their traditional lands and cultural resources," according to the announcement. The land would assume the status of other reservation lands, being held in trust by the Department of the Interior for the benefit of the tribes.

The announcement also identifies two other alternatives: maintaining the status quo, or creating an "annual funding agreement" under which the tribes would assume control, but to a lesser extent.

In a press release issued on Jan. 18, the tribes hailed the agency's proposal.

"We look forward to cooperating with the service in its preparation of a comprehensive conservation plan, including evaluation of Bison Range restoration," Tribal Chairman Vernon S. Finley stated in the release. "The Tribes look forward to the day when we can extend our record of natural resources management to the Bison Range, including its bison that descend from the herd managed by Tribal members a century ago."

Read more at: <http://www.leaderadvertiser.com/article/20170126/ARTICLE/170129986>

## **USDA To Update Definition Of 'Genetic Engineering'**

*(From Sustainable Food News)*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) said Wednesday it is proposing to update its definition of "genetic engineering" to mean techniques that use recombinant or synthetic nucleic acids with the intent to create or alter a genome.

The agency said the change would be among several proposed revisions to its biotechnology regulations in a notice that will publish in the Federal Register on January 19. This would be the first comprehensive revision of the regulations since they were established in 1987.

The proposed rule updates the regulations in a number of areas, all within the agency's current statutory authority under the Plant Protection Act passed into law in 2000.

Genetically engineered (GE) plants that are not engineered with plant pest sequences do not fall under our current regulations even though they may pose noxious weed risks.

"We are proposing to implement the noxious weed authority to close this gap," the agency said.

APHIS is proposing a regulatory program in which it first assesses GE organisms to determine if they pose plant pest or noxious weed risks. If APHIS concludes that a GE organism does not pose a plant pest or noxious weed risk, then APHIS would not require a permit for the importation, interstate movement, and environmental release (outdoor use) of the GE organism.

"On the other hand, if APHIS determines, based on risk analysis that controls on movement are needed, APHIS will work with the requestor to establish appropriate permit conditions to manage identified risks to allow safe movement," APHIS said. "By "movement" we mean import, interstate movement, or environmental release (regulated controlled outdoor use such as in field trials)."

So, how does the proposed rule address new genome-editing techniques? APHIS said it "regulates the products of biotechnology and not specific biotech techniques."

Products of the so-called "new genome-editing techniques" would be regulated under this part only if they pose plant pest or noxious weed risk, APHIS said.

"Consistent with the [Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology](#), APHIS continues to work closely with EPA and FDA on various issues related to biotechnology, including on genome editing," the agency said. "We intend to work cooperatively with other

relevant agencies that may also be considering their policies or approaches related to genome editing applications within their jurisdictions."

Also on Wednesday, the FDA [published for comment a new draft guidance on the regulation of intentionally altered genomic DNA in animals](#), and solicited comments in a Request for Information (RFI 1248) on the use of genome editing techniques to produce new plant varieties used for human or animal food.

Check out the [APHIS Q&A](#) for more information.

APHIS' proposed rule will be available for public review and comments will be accepted for 120 days beginning January 19 through May 19.

After the public comment period closes, APHIS will decide how or whether to finalize the regulations based on its evaluation of public comments to the proposed revisions.

APHIS will also make available a draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that it intends to publish for public comment "soon."

## **High Court to Decide Where WOTUS Case Should Be Heard**

*(From AgriPulse)*

The Supreme Court will decide whether the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals was right to assert jurisdiction over legal challenges to the "waters of the U.S." rule.

The court decided today to grant a petition seeking review of the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit's [fractured decision](#), in which that court narrowly determined that it should adjudicate the numerous WOTUS challenges.

The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) filed the [petition](#) in September challenging that decision, noting that even Circuit Judge David McKeague, who agreed with the federal government, expressed serious doubts about the government's reasoning.

The Clean Water Act gives federal appeals courts "original jurisdiction" to review certain categories of EPA decisions to implement the law. The federal government argued before the appeals court and in response to the NAM petition that WOTUS would fall into one of those categories - "actions "approving or promulgating any effluent limitation or other limitation."

But NAM said that the WOTUS rule "is no 'limitation' at all. The agencies concede that it is 'not self-executing' but merely 'helps to delineate the practical scope' of the (Clean Water) Act."

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association hailed the Supreme Court decision to review the jurisdictional issue. "It shows that the court has a continued interest in private property rights and we look forward to oral arguments this spring," Scott Yager, the group's environmental counsel, said.

And the Pacific Legal Foundation, which is involved in the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit and the Supreme Court litigation, [said](#) that allowing the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit decision to stand "would prohibit federal trial courts around the country from hearing lawsuits from aggrieved landowners and other members of the regulated public; instead, such challenges would effectively be concentrated in the first appellate court to consider a challenge."

PLF is representing farmers, ranchers and developers in the Supreme Court case. It said determining the proper venue “is an important question because it could affect how and where plaintiffs may challenge questionable rulemaking under the Clean Water Act in future cases, and perhaps other laws as well.”