



## **Weekly Update from the National Bison Association**

A news and update service **exclusively** for members of the National Bison Association.  
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**July 1, 2016**

### **Feature Column: Conservation Committee – Donald Beard, Chair**

I don't know about where you are, but here it has been too (insert your favorite descriptor here—hot, cold, wet, dry...etc.) No matter where you live, the one constant factor that we all have to deal with is change. These changes bring with them decisions that need to be made regarding your operations and the wellness of not only your animals, but also your land.

The NBA Conservation committee, whose members represent a broad spectrum of the bison industry, is proud to have been tasked with developing a plan that will assist you in making these important decisions. The goal is to allow the flexibility to set up a conservation management plan that will provide monitoring capabilities for your unique operation. This plan is a broad template that you customize to meet your goals while at the same time allowing to achieve basic objectives that will further the goal of contributing to bison conservation. In developing this plan, the committee has made sure that we are protecting the producer's ability to manage their operation as they see fit.

The plan will contain objectives that address the great shaggy beast we choose to raise and admire, but also will address the health of our lands that we live on. As discussed many times by our committee during development, many of these objectives are already being performed by members such as you. This document should give those who participate an avenue to quantify the results and perhaps provide an opportunity to learn more, improve production which could lead to better margins and happier people!

The take home message here is that this plan will be totally voluntary, totally customizable, and will provide the managers with the tools needed to assist in making the decisions necessary to protect our new National Mammal for future generations that come behind us.

I for one am very proud to be a part of this hard working dedicated committee that has taken on the task of developing this plan.

### **NBF Now Accepting Hall of Fame Nominations**

The National Buffalo Hall of Fame is accepting nominations for its hall of fame, which honors those who have done the most to further the restoration of bison.

The museum in Jamestown, N.D., displays plaques and physical memorabilia relating to each honoree. Current plans are to include a replica of the Hall of Fame in the traveling bison exhibit that starts its tour this fall.

Go to the Buffalo Hall of Fame page on the National Buffalo Foundation Web page - <http://www.nationalbuffalofoundation.org/#!hall-of-fame/cvsh> - to see the requirements, learn what the foundation looks for in nominees and to download a nomination form.

The Hall of Fame was founded in 1980. The administration of the Hall of Fame transitioned to the National Buffalo Foundation when the American Bison Association and the National Buffalo Association merged and the foundation was created.

## To Truly Bring Bison Back To The Plains, Ranchers Say We Must Eat Them

*(From Harvest Public Media)*

Massive bison herds used to be a staple of the Great Plains. That is until we almost hunted them out of existence.

Now, with a new designation as the United States' national mammal, bison ranchers argue that to conserve the species we have to eat them.

It's an idea called "market-based conservation," and it contends that humans are no good at saving species out of the goodness of our hearts, or motivated by some driving force of environmental justice. Instead, we create demand for an animal and then work hard to keep its population robust so we can gawk at it through binoculars, take pictures of it, or in the case of the American bison, eat it.

Greg Nott is an accidental bison rancher. He didn't grow up on a farm. But in 2012, Greg's wife Tami saw a herd of grazing bison on her way to Wyoming from their home in Longmont, Colorado. She knew then she wanted to raise them, leaving behind their bisonless life.

"How long did it take you to accept that we were going to do this?" Tami asks her husband with a laugh.

"I was pretty opposed to it at first because my background is in [information technology]," Greg says.

Over four years they took steps to pivot from computers to bison. Greg kept his job in database management in Fort Collins, and Tami still commutes a couple of times a week to Longmont doing finance for the couple's church. In the off hours they raise bison, selling meat at nearby farmers markets. The Notts raise their small herd on a wide, grassy piece of prairie a few miles south of the Colorado-Wyoming border near Carr, Colorado.

Their bison heifers are corralled behind a 6 foot tall barbed wire fence. In summer they lose their thick winter coats, looking slim and trim in their warm weather pelts. They take turns rolling around in the dirt, sending a small dust cloud into the sky.

"We have people asking, 'Can we pet them?' And we're like, 'No, please don't,'" Greg says.

Tami agrees, saying "you get your hand in the wrong place, you get a horn."

What the animals lack in calmness and domesticity, they make up for in the price of their meat. No longer relegated to novelty status, bison is in demand at restaurants and grocery stores. The National Bison Association reports sales in retail and restaurants have grown by more than 22 percent over the past two years, topping \$340 million.

Yet the Notts say they didn't just get into the business to make a buck. Part of their desire is to get the animals back on the land they historically roamed.

"In order to save this animal, we're going to have to eat them," Greg says.

That's a sentiment Dave Carter shares. He's the director of the National Bison Association, based in Westminster, Colorado.

"I call it market-based conservation," Carter says.

The idea got a boost recently in the form of congressional action. In a rare lightning strike of cohesion, Congress named the animal America's national mammal.

"I think the goal of this is to put bison on a stage to allow all of us that are connected with this animal to tell the story of bison," Carter says.

The coalition that pushed for that designation included everyone from Native American groups to wildlife advocates to university foundations. Even the Boy Scouts jumped on board. Another flank of the coalition is made up of businesspeople, from small-time ranch associations to Ted Turner, America's most prolific bison rancher. They say by convincing consumers to buy and eat bison, it creates demand. More ranchers raising them means more animals out on the plains.

"Some people will say, 'Well gosh, if this is our national mammal and such an icon, why are we eating it?'"

Full Story and Broadcast link at: <http://www.kunc.org/post/truly-bring-bison-back-plains-ranchers-say-we-must-eat-them>

## **4 people injured this year by bison at Custer State Park**

(From *The Aberdeen News*)

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Bison have injured four people in Custer State Park this year, despite warnings that the animals are dangerous and shouldn't be approached, park officials say.

The attacks have come after a five-year stretch of no such incidents, said Gary Brundige, the park's resource program manager.

"We're constantly warning people to stay back and don't approach buffalo," Brundige told the Rapid City Journal. "The safest place to watch them is from your car."

Park officials said the latest two injuries happened Thursday. In the first incident, a person was charged by a bison, fell down and was trampled. In the second incident, a person was charged and gored, resulting in a leg laceration.

Brundige said both victims got too close to groups of bison that were clustered on the park's west side. Members of each person's party apparently transported them to seek medical treatment immediately after each incident. The park released no further information about the victims or their medical status.

Two other injury-producing bison encounters happened in May. One visitor tried to pat a bison on the head and was gored in the abdomen and tossed several feet in the air. Another person approached a bison and was knocked to the ground.

Brundige has no definitive explanation for the sudden rash of human injuries from bison encounters this season. He said it could be the result of increased visitation, driven partly by a new visitor center and a run of sunny days without rain. Through the end of May, camping activity at the park was already up 13 percent over the same period in 2015.

There are currently about 1,300 bison in the park, and they are one of the main attractions for the park's nearly 2 million visitors. Though bison can appear docile when grazing, they are wild animals that can stand up to 6 feet tall, weigh up to 2,000 pounds and run as fast as 35 mph.

The only known bison-connected human fatality at the park happened in 2001, when an elderly Michigan man died after being gored.

Source. [http://www.aberdeennews.com/wire/ap-state-sd/people-injured-this-year-by-bison-at-custer-state-park/article\\_ce80b317-7268-555e-af83-8f2acc7d2ed7.html](http://www.aberdeennews.com/wire/ap-state-sd/people-injured-this-year-by-bison-at-custer-state-park/article_ce80b317-7268-555e-af83-8f2acc7d2ed7.html)

## **Utah 'pure' bison herd may be key to conserving species**

(From CNN)

Few things register as iconically American as a herd of bison roaming the Great Plains. President Obama has signed a bill declaring bison the "national mammal," but only a fraction of those in existence present a pure picture of the wild animal that once grazed all over the United States.

Now, a small, genetically pure, disease-free, free-ranging herd in the Henry Mountains in Utah has scientists and conservationists excited about the future. The development could be instrumental in bringing back some of the species' splendor.

Genetically pure

"A pure bison is genetically a genuine descendent of the original Plains bison that used to roam North America," said Utah State University Professor of Ecology, Dr. Johan du Toit.

"Most of the bison alive today in North America are essentially hybrids. They're a mix in some way of bison and cattle genes," du Toit said.

Over the 19th and part of the 20th centuries, ranchers confined and crossbred bison with cattle in the hopes of creating livestock with the bison's drought-resistant traits and cattle's docile nature, according to du Toit. Some thought bison might therefore crossbreed with cattle in the wild if given the opportunity.

Utah State and Texas A&M University researchers collected genetic samples over several years.

Their efforts were supported by staff from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Bureau of Land Management.

Despite the fact that the Henry Mountains herd has been grazing freely and side-by-side with cattle for decades, the genetic research indicates the animals have not crossbred with cattle. This means bison may be able to be managed in a mixed grazing system in other parts of the country, giving the Henry Mountains herd both the genetic pedigree and the "source herd" potential that most bison don't have.

"This hybridization issue is purely a function of humans forcing it. Under natural conditions it just does not happen," du Toit said.

Read more. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/06/us/utah-bison-herd/>

## **One Thousand-Year-Old Bison Bones Unearthed**

(From KDLT News)

College students have made a 1,000-year-old discovery in Mitchell at the Prehistoric Indian Village.

But that's not all, the college kids aren't even from this area, they're visiting from the United Kingdom.

Their findings are helping locals understand Native American culture long ago.

"We come in every morning, we get all of our stuff, our equipment that we need and one of us will go down and start excavating out," says Megan Stealey. "Another person will bag any finds, and record them in a notebook."

That's the usual routine Stealey, and 14 other University of Exeter students who traveled from Europe to the U.S., have been performing since June 16.

They traveled to learn about archeological excavation.

Turns out, they'll be the ones helping to educate us.

"We dug about a meter down and we found this pelvis, and then we continued about 10 centimeters and found the vertebrae," explains Amy Chamberlain-Webber, also a University of Exeter student.

The bones they found belong to two bison, an adult and a baby, from 1,000-years-ago.

Archeological Professor at the University of Exeter, Alan Outram says the condition of these two animal remains is what makes them ground breaking.

"It's unusual that we would find these in one piece, normally they have been processed much more," says Outram.

He says this discovery gives us a better idea of how Native Americans butchered and ate bison years and years ago.

"It seems that they certainly liked ribs, because one of the things we can see here is that they've chopped down the side of the vertebrae down the spine, and broke off big racks of ribs," he explains. "I think food is what defines cultures more than anything else, and butchery is certainly different in different parts of the world."

Read more. <http://www.kdlr.com/news/local-news/1000yearold-bison-bones-unearthed/40390520>

## **Smart Women: Breeding better bison**

(From KOTA-ABC)

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (SMART WOMEN) Two bison recently made history as the first bison ever born through in vitro fertilization and surrogate parenting.

They're part of a program at Colorado State University to create a herd of genetically pure bison, free of cattle genes.

Dr. Jennifer Barfield, the lead researcher at Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences said it's a tricky process but the benefits are well worth the work and the expense.

"You help kind of preserve this line of bison that were more similar to the ones that were here before Europeans arrived. For many people that's really important to preserve," Barfield said.

One major benefit of the genetic engineering means they can create buffalo without Brucellosis – a bacterial disease that causes miscarriages.

"We can preserve those really valuable genetics, but also, that in doing so we can produce animals that do not have brucellosis," said Barfield.

The bacteria almost single-handedly hampered bison conservation efforts.

"We incorporate embryo washing and washing of the sperm as well to ensure that when we create new offspring the disease is not there," said Barfield.

The herd is already showing population gains. Six calves have been born.

The project costs about \$90,000 to put the herd on the grassland on the soapstone prairie west of Fort Collins, Colorado, and \$80,000 a year to maintain them, with the funding coming from grants, sponsorships and other fundraising efforts.

Source. <http://www.kotatv.com/content/news/Smart-Women-Breeding-better-bison--385696601.html>

## **During Obama Administration, USDA Has Made Most Significant Food Safety Updates Since 1950s**

*(From USDA Office of Communications Bulletin)*

WASHINGTON - Over the past seven years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has instituted some of the most significant updates to our country's food safety system since the 1950s, leading to a 12 percent drop in foodborne illness associated with meat, poultry and processed egg products from 2009 to 2015. Throughout July, at the height of summer grilling season, USDA will be highlighting these changes, introducing Americans to the men and women who are enacting them, and demonstrating the positive impacts for public health.

"The United States has the strongest food safety system in the world, and over the past seven years it has grown even stronger. We're better now at keeping unsafe food out of commerce, whether it's made unsafe because of dangerous bacteria, or because of an allergen, like peanuts or wheat," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Over the course of this Administration, we have tightened our regulatory requirements for the meat and poultry industry, enhanced consumer engagement around safe food handling practices, and made smart changes to our own operations, ultimately moving the needle on the number of foodborne illness cases attributed to products that we regulate."

USDA has a role to play in ensuring the safety of virtually all foods produced and eaten in America, but its most direct responsibility is through FSIS, the public health agency charged with ensuring America's supply of meat, poultry and processed egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. Through its Agricultural Marketing Service and research agencies, however, USDA is also working to help America's fruit, vegetable and grain producers comply with the landmark Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and is making groundbreaking discoveries that can lead to safer food production methods.

Full text:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOC/bulletins/153daaa>

## **Principles of Sustainable Agriculture Identified in Study**

*(From Southern SARE)*

University of Florida researchers have published "Principles Guiding Practices: A case study analysis of the principles of sustainable agriculture for diverse farms" in the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development.

In a case study of sustainable agriculture farm tours that took place across Florida as part of the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Fellows program, the researchers

identified nine principles that dictate how farmers practice sustainable agriculture, as well as guide them in their daily decision-making and long-term planning. Sustainable farmers anticipate change, recognize limitations, and build strong, mutually beneficial relationships. They invest in their employees, pursue high quality, use profits to grow the business, and take a mid- to long-term view of business. Sustainable farming operations are management-intensive.

Finally, sustainable farmers have a practical passion for farming.

Read more. <http://www.southernsare.org/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/Principles-of-Sustainable-Agriculture>

## **Teaching Manual Now Available for Small Farmers Scaling Up to Wholesale**

The Cornell Small Farms Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Northeast SARE have released the Baskets to Pallets Teaching Manual.

The 16 lesson plans in the manual are intended for an audience of small and mid-scale farmers in New York and the Northeast, who have been primarily direct marketing, but are now seeking to explore wholesale markets such as groceries, food hubs, restaurants, or cooperatives.

The manual contains a series of presentations, discussions, activities, videos and other teaching resources that an agricultural service provider can adapt and tailor to local farmer audiences. To access the Manual online, users must fill out a request form.

Order here: <http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2016/06/22/now-available-baskets-to-pallets-teaching-manual/>

## **Leopold Conservation Award in Wisconsin**

Sand County Foundation proudly presents its Leopold Conservation Award to a private landowner who exemplifies the spirit of this emerging land ethic--an individual or a family who translates their deep abiding love for the land into responsible stewardship and management.

The Leopold Conservation Award recipient receives an Aldo Leopold crystal and \$10,000. If you, or someone you know, is a Wisconsin landowner who is committed to land management practices that increase conservation, apply online.

Application deadline is August 5, 2016.

Learn more. <http://leopoldconservationaward.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2013/11/WI-2016-CFN-Hi-res.pdf>

## **GMO Labeling Compromise Wins Senate OK** *(From Agri-Pulse)*

The Senate easily approved an historic compromise on GMO disclosure standards late Thursday, setting up final action in the House to shut down Vermont's week-old labeling mandate.

Industry groups are lobbying House leaders to allow a vote on the [bill](#) next week before lawmakers break for the national party conventions and their August recess. A House vote is needed before the vote can go to President Obama for his signature.

House GOP leaders face the challenge of getting the legislation approved without losing too much support from conservatives who will object to mandatory GMO disclosure or who may insist on amendments being allowed. Any changes to the bill would send the bill back to the Senate, dooming any chance of getting it enacted before the fall, if then.

Shortly before the Senate's 63-30 vote to pass the bill, House Agriculture Chairman Mike Conaway said the House GOP leadership "was in the throes of trying to figure out, can do it under a closed rule" that would not permit amendments.

The final Senate vote was a foregone conclusion after the Senate had voted 65-32 on Wednesday to limit debate on the legislation. Opponents led by Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., could do little but delay the vote until the entire 30 hours of allowable debate time had expired.

Merkley refused to allow a vote earlier Thursday evening unless they got votes on a series of amendments that could have been poison pills if they had been adopted. Republicans offered to allow a vote on a mandatory labeling amendment proposed by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., but Merkley turned down the offer.

The legislation, which was the result of months of negotiations between Senate Agriculture Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan., and ranking Democrat Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, would allow companies to disclose biotech ingredients through digital smartphone codes rather than with the on-pack text that the Vermont law requires.

Meat and dairy products from animals that are fed biotech feed would be exempt from disclosure as well as foods such as pizza that are mostly meat.

"This is not a health and safety issue. It's an information issue, and it needs to be addressed," Stabenow said as she closed out debate on the bill.

Roberts called the Senate's action the "most important vote for agriculture in the last 20 years," an apparent reference to the 1996 Freedom to Farm law that dismantled Depression-era production controls.

"Our legislation allows farmers to continue using sound science to produce more food with less resources, gives flexibility to food manufacturers in disclosing information, and gives access to more food information that consumers demand."

The Senate measure is markedly different than [a bill that passed the House last year](#) that would simply preempt state labeling laws without mandating any kind of disclosure method. Stabenow said that there had to be some kind of mandatory disclosure to get a sufficient number of Democrats to support a compromise.

The president of the American Soybean Association, Richard Wilkins, called on the House to quickly approve the Senate legislation, even though it went farther than the House version.

He said that "while the Senate bill isn't perfect, it's the best legislation that can become law. A perfect bill that can't pass won't accomplish anything for the nation's farmers or the nation's consumers," Wilkins said.