



National Bison Association

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Bison Issues Overview, September 2019

Indian Buffalo Management Act

Background

The InterTribal Buffalo Council has been working with several Senators to sponsor the Indian Buffalo Management Act, which is intended to fulfill the government-to-government relationship between Tribes and the U.S. in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat through the creation of a permanent buffalo program in the Department of Interior (DOI).

U.S. Rep Don Young (R-AK) will be introducing the bill in the House of Representatives during the week of September 16th. In the Senate, several Senators have expressed a willingness to co-sponsor the bill, but a prime sponsor has not yet been identified.

Provisions

The key provisions of the bill include:

- Creates a permanent program within DOI to promote Native American buffalo restoration and management;
- Authorizes the Secretary of Interior to enter into contracts or cooperative agreements, or to award a grant to Tribes or eligible entities to plan, conduct or implement a buffalo restoration or management program; to develop commercial buffalo enterprises; and to carry out other activities related to buffalo restoration and management.
- Provide technical assistance to eligible entity for expanding and improving buffalo habitat restoration or management. Directs the Secretary to consult with eligible entities on DOI initiatives that affect buffalo habitat.
- Directs the Secretary of Interior to coordinate with eligible entities relating to buffalo and buffalo management in accordance with goals and objectives set forth by in Tribally approved buffalo management programs and Tribal laws and ordinances.
- The bill provides Tribes continued access to surplus buffalo from Federal lands. This also helps entities like National Parks keep their buffalo populations within the carrying capacity and prevents slaughter of Federal buffalo.

NBA Position

The National Bison Association and the InterTribal Buffalo Council entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014 to work together to advance public policies that will help restore bison on private and tribal lands. The Indian Buffalo Management Act will help us move toward that goal by fulfilling the government-to-government relationship between Tribes and the U.S. in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat through the creation of a permanent buffalo program in the Department of Interior.