

## Jim Matheson

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**From:** Sparky the HerdDogg <notifications@herddogg.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 29, 2021 2:33 PM  
**To:** Jim Matheson  
**Subject:** New CMP Application from 777



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Margaret Hillenbrand has just submitted a Conservation Management Plan application for 777

### GENERAL

#### A. Premise Details

1. When was your premise established?: **11/01/1982**
2. What is your total herd size (an average annual count of all live bison): **1800**
3. How many acres, owned & leased, is your premise: **28900**
4. What premise type do you operate? (Select all that apply): **Cow Calf**
5. How many households are directly involved in your operation (count each household that has a significant interest in your business): **4**
6.  Check here if you would be willing to share your completed application with others to help aid in their conservation efforts.

### BISON

#### A. Genetic Stewardship

1. Select all of the following genetic stewardship practices that are in effect in your herd.
  - We never engage in interspecies crossbreeding
  - We completely adhere to the **NBA Code of Ethics**.
  - We have implemented a plan to remove from production, over time, any known negative interspecies genetic influence. (While the science is not yet settled, a good herdsman, with or without the benefit of science, can devise a system to meet this criterion.)

✓ We have implemented a plan for genetic selection protocol for replacements that favors natural selection criteria. (Natural selection criteria would include pregnancy rate, conversion of grass to weight, etc., with little to no supplemental feed.)

2. Please elaborate on your plan and any progress made if you selected answers with a red asterisk.

**We genetically test all replacement heifers and any "dirty" heifers are removed from the herd. All breeding bulls are genetically tested before entering our program. We use Texas A&M to do all of our genetic testing. We are striving to be one of the most genetically diverse herds by the way we select our bulls. We select breeding bulls which have "historic" genetics or as we call them "heritage genetics". For example, we have bulls from Wind Cave National Park, Cap Rock Canyon (original Goodnight genetics), Elk Island, National Bison Range, Custer State Park, to name a few. When we first bought animals for our herd we always selected cows/heifers by "gate-cut" so that we were not picking specific traits and that we were "hopefully" protecting the integrity of bison by not selecting for one or more specific traits. Since we are no longer buying cows, we "gate-cut" our replacement heifers when we work our herd in the fall. We cull any open cows after age 3. We go to age 3 as bison mature later than cattle and we like to give 2 and 3 year olds a chance to become pregnant. After 3 years of age, we cull all open cows and sell late bred cows. We bring bulls in from outside sources and as mentioned above we select for these "heritage" genetics. When bulls stop breeding, or do not breed, we either hunt or cull them. Bulls that do not stay with the herd during breeding season we will cull. Our bulls and cows are together year round to protect family units. Bulls will form "bachelor" groups at the end of breeding. If there are any animals that are not performing well and losing condition we will cull and necropsy them. We try hard to keep bison as bison and protect the integrity of the animal. We like what bison are. They have evolved for many centuries and these traits are important to us. That is why we "gate-cut" animals. Our animals are hardy and perform well on native prairie. We have tracked our meat bulls gains on grass from calves till they leave the ranch to be processed. Records available upon request as the file is too large. We record conception rates and calving rates.**

3. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

*No Files Uploaded*

#### B. Handling & Facilities

1. Select all the following that best describe your animal handling practices and facilities.

✓ Adequate containment of bison. (Escapees are rare and quickly returned home)

✓ Low stress and safe handling facilities and practices are in place. (A very low level of injuries and stress to animals and humans.)

✓ Adequate containment of bison that includes consideration for other local wildlife. (Deer, elk, antelope, moose, etc. migrations. Free movement of prairie grouses, etc.)

2. Please elaborate if you selected any answers with a red asterisk.

**We upgrade our handling facilities after each annual round-up to make our facilities safer for both animals and humans. We have used some recommendations from Temple Grandin as well. All of our fencing allows movement of all wildlife. We had Game, Fish, and Parks look at our fencing to make sure it was wildlife friendly. We recently received certification from the Audubon Society as a "bird friendly" ranch. In addition, we are currently in the process of GAP (Global Animal Partnership) certification.**

3. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

*No Files Uploaded*

### C. Health & Welfare

1. Please upload a copy of your bison health and welfare plan (i.e. deworming, vaccinations, quarantine protocol – if used - monitoring methods, goals, etc.), or comment in the text box below.

*No Files Uploaded*

**We quarantine any animals that we purchase for a minimum of 1 month or more to protect our herd. We have a Management Plan in place that covers this. The Management Plan is updated every 6 years or as needed as things continuously pop up. Currently, we are in the process of being GAP (Global Animal Partnership) program which emphasizes the health and welfare of our animals. We have a ranch manual and employee manual in place to teach new employees what the ranch is all about and how we handle animals, etc. We work with Fall River Veterinary Clinic, Hot Springs, SD. We have a vaccination program that we administer in the Fall when we work our animals. The vaccinations are: Cows/Bulls: Ultrabac 7 Virashield 6 VL5HB Multimin Decotomax Mycoplasma Heifer Calves: Bangs Vaccinated Ultrabac 7 Mycoplasma Pyramid 5+ Presponse Decotomax Multimin RFID Tag Bull Calves: Same as heifers minus the bangs vaccination If we need to treat any animal when will work the herd it recorded and the ear tags notched so that the following year we can recheck. When we work animals we record weight, number, pregnancy, vaccinations, and any other comment so that we can compare the following year. If they were injured, had pink-eye, etc. Deaths are recorded as well. Upon death the earth is removed and recorded. We also record our conception rate and calving rate each year.**

2. Please upload or comment in the text box below on your progress with and/or adherence to your health and welfare plan.

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**We work with Fall River Vet Clinic for all of our vaccinations. We Bangs vaccinate all replacement heifers as we feel that is being a good neighbor. We work with our State Veterinary to make sure we are in State**

**compliance and/or if we have questions. When shipping animals to other States we make sure that we have the appropriate vaccination for those animals. We have noticed over the last few years that our calving and conceptions rates are higher and animal health is good because of our vaccination protocols. Last year (2019) we had several cases of "pink eye" which we treated last fall and this year we had very few cases.**

3. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

*No Files Uploaded*

## LAND

### A. Soil Health

1. Develop a plan to increase soil health and submit it in the comments section below or with an upload. (i.e. increase in carbon, biology, fertility, etc. Monitoring method.)

**Paper-Published.pdf**

2. Please provide evidence of a positive trend in increasing soil health in the comments section below or with an upload.

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3. Please elaborate here, if applicable

**We had a year long study completed by Applied Ecological Services to determine the health of the land. The above paper is the result of that study. We also are EOV certified with the Savory Institute. We have several transects setup up both by the Savory Institute for the EOV program and several transect setup with Kirk Gadzia from HMI that we have been collecting data since 1990. Also, we work close with our NRCS office.**

4. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

*No Files Uploaded*

### B. Erosion Control

1. Identify erosion concerns and develop a plan to arrest the erosion in the comments section below or with an upload. (i.e. wind and/or water erosion. Timed grazing, water management systems, cover crops, monitoring methods, goals, etc.)

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2. Please provide evidence of progress on your soil erosion management plan in the comments section below or with an upload.

*No Files Uploaded*

3. Please elaborate here, if applicable

**We have worked with Kirk Gadzia to improve water erosion on roads creating run off diversions. Our grazing practices improve ground cover by increasing litter and vegetative cover thus reducing wind erosion. Photos will be available for the next audit.**

4. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

*No Files Uploaded*

### C. Plant & Animal Diversity

1. Please submit your plan to manage your land to benefit an increasing variety of plant and animal species in the comments section below or with an upload. (What are your target species? How do you monitor?)

**Transect Data.xls Transect Graph.png**

2. Document your progress on your plan to manage your land to benefit an increasing variety of plant and animal species in the comments section below or with an upload.

**Paper-Published.pdf**

3. Please elaborate here, if applicable

**We have 20+ years of transect data and grazing plans. Transect data is uploaded above. Grazing plans upon request as they are difficult to scan. I uploaded a power point that has photos and data to shows land improvements. I also uploaded a graph from the transect data that shows a decrease in distance between plants over the years. We have also seen increases in native plant diversity. Species composition has increased as well. Cheat grass comes and goes depending on timing and amount of moisture. Overall, the transect data shows positive trends. At the time of writing this I have had issues finding other graphs. Will locate and upload at next audit or before.**

4. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

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## PEOPLE

### A. Community

1. Identify opportunities to positively benefit the health of individuals and your community in the comments box. (Smoking cessation programs for employees, participation in local health fairs, bison meat and/or health club memberships as an employee bonus, etc.)

**Employees each receive a bison for meat for their families. We also donate meat to the local Feeding SD program, we donate meat for Native American ceremonies, we share meat with the many families working at Prairie Edge a local retail store which employs peoples of many races. Several members of the 777 team are volunteer firefighters. We support the local fire department and sponsor community events in conjunction with the local**

**fire department. Employees are encourage to workout, most do have some kind of workout regiment.**

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2. Please provide evidence of how your efforts have positively impacted the health of individuals and your community in the comments box.

**We work closely with several Native American families and organizations to help them have healthy, culturally important protein.**

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3. Please use this box if you have any other comments you would like to make.

**We work with The Honest Bison to supply healthy grassfed meat Nationwide.**

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4. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

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#### B. Economic Opportunity

1. Identify ways that your operation can provide a positive economic impact in the comments box. (i.e. wages paid, increased local trade, more stable business model, etc.)

**We pay fair wages, supply living accommodations, health benefits, etc. to our employees. In turn they contribute to the economy of our communities. Our employees are well taken care of. We work with The Honest Bison to supply 100% certified grassfed animals for the growing grassfed market demands. We also supply quality range ready breeding stock. We do have a Management Plan for the ranch. Currently, the owner is a board member for the National Bison Association (NBA) and the National Buffalo Foundation(NBF). The owner also is on the Science and Research Committee and the Conservation Committee of the National Bison Association. She also is a board member of the new formed Center of Excellence for Bison Studies in conjunction with South Dakota State University (SDSU). Other employees as well as the owner have been board members of the Dakota Territory Bison Association (DTBA). All members of the 777 team work to fundraise/support/sponsor for organizations that are important to them. Such as the local 4H, local churches, fire department, NBA, DTBA, The Nature Conservancy, Savory Institute, Feeding SD, The United Way, and other personal favorite organizations. Members of the 777 team have presented at many conferences including the NBA winter Conference, The Range Society, Women In Ranching, Intertribal Bison Council Conference, Regeneration conferences, to name a few. Also, they have been interviewed for several podcasts talking about the benefits of bison meat, the benefits of Holistic Management, being a woman rancher, and about life as a bison rancher. We have reached many different**

**groups of people talking about bison, bison meat, ranching and caring for the land.**

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2. Please describe how your efforts have created or sustained a positive economic impact in the comments box.

**Working with The Honest Bison has provided us with a sustainable market that not only economically impacts the ranch but also many households that are eating a healthy product that supports regenerative practices and the families on the ranch. And we supply breeding stock for the growing bison industry. We have mentored a new, young bison producer. And as mentioned above are members, participants, and presenters.**

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3. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

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### C. Leadership & Education

1. Please identify ways in which you can attain 8 credit hours of continuing education over the next year that pertains to your Conservation Management Plan. (We encourage local participation as well as NBA participation. Soil, grazing, water management workshops, etc.)

**We attend several Bison conferences, we participate in our local NRCS events, we promote continuing education with one employee finishing his undergrad and another finishing a second Masters program which is conservation based. We attend ITBC programs when possible, and we are always looking for any opportunity to learn and grow. We are part of the local rural water program, we put on Holistic Management seminars to improve our learning and to help others. We have been part of the American Grassfed Association and attend their conferences as well as Savory Events. Education is encouraged for all 777 team members. Currently, one member is finishing his undergraduate studies and another is finishing a second Masters program. Next year we plan to attend a low stress handling course along with several conferences. Currently, participating in the Quivira Regeneration Virtual Conference and Women Leading Regeneration Conference. Owner is a member of Women in Ranching Program.**

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2. If you have attained or hosted 8 or more credit hours of continuing education that pertains to your Conservation Management Plan, please provide documentation.

**We put on Holistic Management seminars that usually last over a three day period. We host this events every few years. We will be a host ranch for Ranching for Profit's Executive Link in November as well as a few more**

**events currently in the process of finalizing. Recently, we just got certified by the Audubon Society as a Bird friendly ranch.**

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3. Please use this box if you have any other comments you would like to make.

**Will update as we go forward.**

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4. Please upload any additional files here, if applicable

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[Review CMP Application](#)

If you have any questions or follow up please email Margaret Hillenbrand at [mimi@777bisonranch.com](mailto:mimi@777bisonranch.com)

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