

**The Grass is Greener on the Other Side:
Developing Climate Smart Bison Commodities**

Background, Benefits, and Requirements for Producers

Project Background:

South Dakota State University (SDSU) was awarded a Climate Smart Commodities grant funded by the USDA-NRCS. The overall goal is to develop climate-smart bison commodities and includes three main pillars: 1) producer engagement; 2) research; and 3) market development.

Producers will receive an incentive payment to implement a grazing plan along with NRCS land management practices to support climate smart raised bison. Producers MAY also have the opportunity to market climate smart produced bison at a premium to selected buyers. SDSU will serve as the lead for the research pillar, along with support from Texas A&M, C-Lock, Inc. and Yard Stick. Lead project partners for the producer engagement pillar include Tanka Fund (enrollment and advisement of bison producers; primarily Native American producers); National Bison Association (recruitment of bison producers); AdoptAg (producer enrollment platform); and Millborn Seeds (producer recruitment and advisement of climate smart seeding practices). Lead project partners for the market development pillar include National Bison Association (bison marketing and purchasing liaison); and Cold Creek Buffalo Company (bison purchasing).

Today's consumers are increasingly concerned with climate and environmental change and now desire to purchase environmentally sustainable products that produced using a lesser environmental footprint. The drive to develop climate smart bison products is in response to that demand. This grant enables producers to enact land management practices suitable to their operations and capture the associated value when marketing their livestock.

Requirements for Producers:

- Suitable tract of land on which producers and climate smart partners can collaborate to develop applicable land management practices (shown below) that will enhance and be applicable to the land. (Note: acres cannot be enrolled in other environmental outcomes program or receiving funding for other NRCS programs on the same acres):
 - Cover crop planting
 - Forage planting
 - Range planting
 - Prescribed grazing
 - Silvopasture
 - Riparian herbaceous cover
 - Prescribed burning
 - Upland wildlife habitat management
- GPS mapping of land tract.
- Enrollment with appropriate partner (NBA or Tanka Fund) in conjunction with Farm Services Agency (FSA) and engagement with producer platform (AdoptAg).
- Approved grazing plan developed in consultation with AgSpire, Tanka Fund, or the National Bison Association's land advisor.
- Permission for the collection of soil samples on designated land tract before and after land management practice implementation.
- RFID identification (eID; tags provided) of associated livestock to enable tracking for premium payment.
- Engagement with project marketing agents to ensure needed climate smart information is collected for verification (to be determined).

Producer Benefits:

- **eID tags:** electronic identification (RFID) tags will be provided for all livestock engaged in the project.
- **Technical Assistance:**
 - Land advisors will assist participants by providing information and expertise to help make their operations more resilient, diversified and sustainably managed. They will also assist producers with development of grazing management plans and understanding best practices to produce climate smart commodities.
 - Marketing agents will provide technical assistance to ranches and producers to help them understand the program requirements for producing livestock commodities with a positive land use impact that are eligible for premiums.
- **Practice incentive payments:** CS land advisors will verify that the practices have been completed and issue an incentive payment for the practice.
 - Cover Crop Establishment @ \$50/acre
 - Forage Planting @ \$75/acre
 - Range Planting @ \$100/acre
 - Prescribed grazing TBD
 - Silvopasture TBD
 - Riparian herbaceous cover TBD
 - Prescribed burning TBD
 - Upland wildlife habitat management TBD

• **Premiums:** A market-based premium *may* be provided by Cold Creek Buffalo Company (bison), or other selected buyer, for climate smart verified feeder animals purchased through the project. Animal enrollment and tagging does not guarantee a premium payment will be awarded on any animal.

- Requirements to be eligible for premiums on bison:
 - Annual NBA membership, to include adherence to the NBA Code of Ethics and utilization of the data collection app.
 - Any applicable production records supplied to buyer and Climate Smart team.
 - Supplement records, if applicable
 - eID provided ear tags to be applied to all animals before leaving home ranch.
 - Weaned a minimum of 30 to 60 days, or a determined time period agreed upon between buyer and seller.
 - Minimum weights of 350 lbs. at 7 months; 400 pounds at 9 months; 600 pounds for bulls at 14 months and 500 pounds for heifers at 14 months.
 - Initial vaccinations, with one round of boosters, received 45-60 days prior to being shipped, or as determined between seller and buyer.
 - Mycoplasma bovis, if designated by buyer.
 - Vision 7 w/somnus or other veterinarian-recommended respiratory vaccine applicable for the given area
 - One Shot for Pasteurella.
 - Injectable wormer as specified by the buyer, or for the midwest and further west, injectable and a white wormer simultaneously for the central east and south-eastern ¼ of the U.S.
 - Proof of protocols met to be provided by seller to buyer and Climate Smart team through producer app, affidavit, or veterinarian certification.