



BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN

Dear Tribal Representative,

February 5, 2018

My name is James Holt, Buffalo Field Campaign board member, and Nez Perce tribal member. I send this letter as a request for your support. The plight of our relative Qolqaalx (Buffalo) in Yellowstone is known to us all. At this time, we have an opportunity to influence the disposition of critical bison habitat on National Forests in the region. We know the sacred relationship with the land and bison is paramount to Indian peoples. Buffalo Field Campaign also believes in the spirit of the buffalo. We strive to build unity in actions that secure the long-term viability of Yellowstone bison herds. Your support helps make this possible.

Since our inception Buffalo Field Campaign has supported, and is respectful of the diverse views, uses, and relationships, the many tribal peoples have with bison. It is our belief that your support of our report, will strengthen the spiritual, ceremonial, subsistence, and treaty rights for tribes and buffalo. By expanding habitat on National Forests in the region, we can seek to increase the diversity and range of existing bison herds. Once bison herds can fulfill their ancestral role in the region, it will provide greater opportunities for tribal spiritual engagement and treaty subsistence.

Every year more tribal members are stepping forward, seeking to provide for their families via treaty-reserved hunting rights. At our count, over 30,000 tribal members with treaty-reserved rights for two, small existing bison herds in the Yellowstone region. An increase in range for the bison on National Forest lands may alleviate hunting bottlenecks that hinder existing tribal hunts. This may also aid hunters in reverting back to traditional bison hunting times if they populate the National Forests year-round.

My request is not merely to support the treaty right to bison. With more bison on the National Forest, it is our hope tribal people may also realize increased spiritual connectivity with these genetically-intact plains bison that still roam their ancestral lands. We need the bison to take their place, for the land is ailing. Increasing bison habitat on National Forests expands the healing our sacred brother can give back to the land. In turn, we know the land needs Indigenous spiritual leaders to help in this healing. We are here to help in any way possible. Our report is a strong step in the right direction. Your support helps us in our efforts toward healing the land and bison.

Enclosed with my letter you will find a compact disc containing our report, along with an electronic copy of all sources relied upon to write it. The report can also be downloaded by clicking on the Give us a Sign! Banner on our home page:
<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/>

"Protecting the Last Wild Bison"

Please consider becoming a signatory to our report and passing a Tribal resolution in support of listing American bison as a species of conservation concern. The Custer Gallatin is revising its forest plan to guide future decisions about bison on the National Forest, and the Regional Forester is taking comments on listing species of conservation concern in Region 1. The Custer Gallatin's proposed action for bison is to let the state of Montana determine where bison can and cannot roam the National Forest. Under the new forest planning rule, the Regional Forester decides which species to list as species of conservation concern.

Please read our report in support of the U.S. Forest Service Region 1 listing American bison as a species of conservation concern on National Forest lands. We have also developed a more appropriate proposed action for bison on the Custer Gallatin (detailed in Chapter 12 of our report). It is an expertly sourced report that prioritizes bison, seeks to heal the land, and respects tribal sovereignty. For decades, Buffalo Field Campaign has been a voice for the Yellowstone bison. We need your voice too. We are humbly requesting your voice on our critical initiative. Please freely share this information with other tribal leaders.

Tribal resolutions addressed to Region 1 Regional Forester Leanne M. Marten and Custer Gallatin Forest Supervisor Mary C. Erickson must be received by March 5, 2018.

Qeciyewyew iinim himyu (Thank you my relatives) for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James L. Holt Sr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Holt Sr., board member
Buffalo Field Campaign
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Postscript: On January 31, 2018, U.S. District Court Judge Christopher R. Cooper advanced our Endangered Species Act petition to list the Yellowstone bison. As we move toward securing a 12-month species status review, the traditional and cultural knowledge we collectively bring as indigenous people will be vital in recovering wild buffalo, in particular, on National Forests in the Yellowstone region. Judge Cooper's opinion for the Washington, D.C. District Court is online: <https://www.westernwatersheds.org/bison-opinion/>