



BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN

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Chairman Jeffrey Welborn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife & Parks committee Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
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Mr. Chairman and members of the House Fish, Wildlife & Parks committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on SB 341. Mr. Chairman, I would also request that my testimony be shared with committee members and entered into the hearing record. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone's wild buffalo herd, protect the natural habitat of wild free-roaming buffalo and native wildlife, and to work with people of all Nations to honor the sacredness of the wild buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign is located in West Yellowstone, Gallatin County, Montana, and is supported by volunteers and citizens in Montana and by people from around the world who value America's native wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and enjoy the natural wonders of our irreplaceable public lands.

As an organization and on behalf of our members, Buffalo Field Campaign is concerned and actively involved with protecting the last remaining descendants of indigenous buffalo in North America to occupy their original range, and securing long-term protection for viable populations of wild buffalo and year-round habitat.

Buffalo Field Campaign is adamantly opposed to SB 341, for many reasons.

SB 341 defers public decision making to private property owners and buries in red tape any reintroduction of large predators, endangered species, and game animals including buffalo in Montana.

SB 341 would also prevent any reintroduction of native wildlife species if it jeopardizes "existing grazing allotments" or "restrict[s] or limit[s] the use or value of private property." How this restriction or limitation of property is defined is anyone's guess.

Additionally, a Fiscal Note for SB 341 imposes over \$522,500 in costs in its 1st year to be paid by Montanans to thwart the reintroduction of valued native wildlife missing from our vast landscapes including wild buffalo, an ecologically extinct species.

These costs represent a fiscal burden on Montana taxpayers with no corresponding benefit for our wildlife.

Outside of Yellowstone National Park, migratory buffalo that retain their identity as a wildlife species occupy a fraction of 1% of the nearly 100 million acres of land in Montana.

The status of bison as a wildlife species in Montana (S2) is "at risk because of very limited and/or potentially declining population numbers, range and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state."

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks also designated bison a Tier I species: "Greatest conservation need. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has a clear obligation to use its resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these species, communities, and focus areas." (Adams and Dood, Montana FWP 2011)

The outcome sought by SB 341 is to turn the reintroduction of native species long gone from, or threatened with extinction in Montana, into a time consuming, costly quagmire entangled in endless red tape rather than a welcome home.

If you are a property owner in Montana who desires reintroduced buffalo on your land, you have no private property rights under SB 341 as any

other private property owner could simply object based on an undefined and undetermined claim that might "restrict or limit the use or value of private property."

Similarly, Montanans who want to see native wildlife recovered by re-introducing the species on public lands would have their interest vetoed by any landowner who is permitted to graze cattle on our vast public lands.

Wildlife in Montana belongs not to the state or any one person or interest group; native species belong to future generations who are the beneficiaries of our wildlife heritage trust.

Wildlife reintroduction is the responsibility of wildlife agencies entrusted with ensuring our wildlife heritage is protected and persists for future generations to enjoy and experience.

In poll after poll, the majority of Montanans have made it clear that we favor restoration of wild bison including 70% of 400 registered voters polled by Moore Information in 2011.

Montana's wild lands, wildlife including wild bison, recreation and open spaces are cherished by Montanans and draw millions of people who annually sustain a multi-billion dollar economy. SB 341 stands in conflict with Montanans who hold that special actions can and should be made to ensure that our wild places and the native species that inhabit them are preserved for future generations.

SB 341 is not amendable. Thank you for taking action to prevent the erosion of Montanan's ability to recover and save our natural wildlife heritage and advancing fiscal responsibility by voting to defeat SB 341.

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