



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 3/24/09
SB 337

P. O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-3186
FAX:406-444-4952
Ref:DO135-09
March 20, 2009

House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
Montana's 61st Legislative Assembly
Capitol Station
Helena MT 59620

Dear Committee Members:

During the March 19, 2009 hearing on SB 337, Representative Smith requested information regarding the public input on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) related to the proposed translocation of bison to the Wind River Reservation (WRR) in Wyoming. Attached please find a one-page summary of the 80 comments received.

Also attached is a copy of a letter from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA). This was the only comment from Wyoming. As you can see, the WDA supports Alternative A in the EA, which is to translocate the bison to the WRR. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and the Northern Arapaho Tribe will be addressing the questions raised by the WDA in their letter in the final EA and/or a memorandum of understanding if the final decision to translocate bison to the WRR is approved.

Please let me know if you have any additional information requests related to this bill.

Sincerely,

Christian A. Smith
Deputy Director

Encs.

c: Sen. John Brendon

Quarantine Bison EA Summary

March 17, 2009

Opposed	1
Supportive	73
Undefined	6

Points in support:

prefer relocation to killing	8
relationship between Native Americans and bison	5
conservation of genetics	5
good to establish another wild herd	4
demonstration of the quarantine program's ability to certify disease-free bison	2
facilitates coexistence of managed wild and domestic animals	1

Form letter points:

50 included in the
supportive total
above

maintaining genetically pure species
quarantine program demonstrated its ability to certify disease-free bison
benefits to the Northern Arapaho Tribe

Additional themes:

surplus bison should only be managed by federal agencies	1
MT Dept. of Livestock should not be involved with bison mgmt.	1
there should be an effort to address brucellosis in elk	1
stockman's assoc. should not be able to dictate bison mgmt.	1
why relocate when money can be made through license sales for hunting bison?	1
moving bison will cost state money	1
additional management of the translocated herd is recommended until they become familiar with the new surroundings and boundaries of their area	1
lack of reasonable alternatives other than A and B	1
stress of translocation could be detrimental to pregnant bison	1
EA fails to address SB 337 in the MT Legislature that is focused on the bison leaving the quarantine facility	1
clarification of the designation of bison leaving facility (wild, domestic or livestock)	1
will the progeny of the translocated bison be considered under "public ownership", if so how will management decisions be made?	1
if the translocated bison need to stay on the Red Canyon Ranch beyond 2-years, how many bison can the resources of the ranch support?	1
will the translocated bison be able to range freely within the reservation?	1
clarify why the fencing is necessary around the Arapaho Ranch for bison	1
better define hunting methods to be used by Tribe	1
disagrees with the reason why bison can not be returned to YNP	1
what are the bison management plans from the Arapaho Tribe?	1
what will happen to the bison if they escape?	1
how does FWP know the elk are not carriers of brucellosis?	1

rec-3/17

Wyoming Department of Agriculture



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The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.
Equal Opportunity in Employment and Services

Dave Freudenthal, Governor
John Etchepare, Director

March 9, 2009

Bison Translocation
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave
Helena, MT 59601

To whom it may concern:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to translocate 41 brucellosis-free bison from the bison quarantine facility near Gardiner, Montana to the Northern Arapaho Tribe at the Wind River Reservation in central Wyoming.

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposal has major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA will Support Alternative A as proposed by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). We believe bison, like other livestock, are an important vegetative management tool and can benefit the Northern Arapaho Tribe in many ways.

We have read the EA and believe there are a number of major management components missing, which should be in place and answered prior to the release of any bison.

- **Fencing:**
 - 1) Describe the type of fencing proposed, including height, wire type, fence post type, etc. FWP should give fencing alternatives within the proposed alternative, including electrical.
 - 2) Describe future maintenance of the fence ensuring bison will remain on the ranch.
 - 3) Describe how this fence is designed to permit wildlife like, deer, elk, antelope, sage grouse and others to migrate in and out of the perimeter fencing.
 - 4) Describe how this fence is considering Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) recommendations for deterring sage grouse contact or interference.
- **Protocol for Escape:** The FWP fails to describe the protocol for escaped bison outside the perimeter fencing. Escape of bison with current fences on the Red Canyon Ranch has created concern by local community members, motorists and neighboring landowners. We strongly encourage FWP and Northern Arapaho Tribe address who is ultimately responsible for the damage and possible disease transmission caused by free roaming bison. This is a major concern needing addressed in the EA prior to releasing the bison and having this reviewed by the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLB).

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3/9/2009

Bison Translocation

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- Water: The FWP and Northern Arapaho Tribe fail to include any discussion of where the bison will go for water and if this water source is vital for other wildlife. Are there enough water sources to prevent over utilization? Is there a rotational grazing system in place to mimic seasonal use by the bison? Yearlong livestock grazing is highly discouraged by wildlife advocates and we strive to support rangeland health enhancements. We would encourage the Northern Arapaho Tribe work with a rangeland monitoring specialist to gather baseline vegetative data and continue to monitor rangeland health into the future.

The WDA thanks FWP and the Northern Arapaho Tribe for receiving our comments. We look forward to the addition of our concerns and comments in the EA and prior to the implementation of this translocation. As a final recommendation, the Northern Arapaho Tribe may benefit from a bison management plan, which the WDA, WLB and WGFD could help review to ensure positive results are achieved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Etchepare" with a flourish at the end.

John Etchepare
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office
WDA Board of Agriculture
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
Northern Arapaho Tribal Council
Wyoming Livestock Board