

## Closing

It seems that the opponents of this bill have an agenda of change that they don't disclose.

First of all, this bill offers no change as to how buffalo or bison are handled around Yellowstone Park. The IBMP agreement is partially successful and the hunting opportunities will not be effected by this bill.

Secondly, the discovery and containment of brucellosis are paramount to the safety and protection of all livestock, bison and bovine. Spreading this disease through reckless management and poor science is absolutely unacceptable. Our number one industry in Montana is Agriculture - Livestock and grain. The national economy is in the tank but cattle and wheat are producing for Montana enough revenue to help get through these hard times.

Thirdly, there are among us, environmental organizations that have an agenda that would turn central and eastern Montana into a buffalo range. They know or should know that large numbers of buffalo or bison cannot coexist with cattle. They eat as much as a cow and would in a short time increase numbers to the extent that cattle would have to give way to bison, to attempt to protect healthy grazing management practices.

Last, but far from least, the opponents primarily represent foreign and out of state organizations that are willing to destroy our precious and delicate culture to replace it with an ecosystem that never existed. Montana was only a part of the migration by wild bison before the land was settled. North Central Montana rarely experienced the vast numbers of bison that roamed freely in better climates, like Southern Montana to Nebraska and Kansas. Yes, there were bison herds that reached Montana, but if the opponents wanted to recreate an ecosystem that represented bison in their normal habitat, including migration, they should start at the Yellowstone River and include all the land between there and the mouth of the Missouri River.

Our culture is best described by the statement we hear over and over, The Last Best Place.

Even though Montana is rich with scenery, vastness, and offers incredible exposure to wildlife, the Last Best Place statement speaks more about the people of Montana. In Central and Eastern Montana you find people that help each other and will lend a hand to a stranger. They are very independent and self reliant. They are driven by their moral code usually based on faith in God. Patriotism to their country runs high and honesty is held very dear. A handshake nearly always closes a deal. There are many more qualities unlisted here but my point is that this culture is very special and very rare and very fragile in the sense that our numbers are

few. This culture is a product of an extraordinary mix - wood cutters and trappers along the Missouri River where the paddle wheel driven boats were their only connection to the outside world. Gold miners that came hoping to be the one that discovered paradise, colored gold. Texas cowboys that brought great herds of cattle then stayed to become part of our history. Then, after 1900 came the homesteaders, those who survived the Depression were proven Montanans, showing their dedication and heart. These examples and more are the ingredients it took to be one of the Last Best People in the Last Best Place. This culture is not duplicated anywhere else in the world and should be respected before a change representing fantasy and Large outside money interests destroys it forever.