



# Greater Yellowstone Coalition

People protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations.

EXHIBIT 20  
DATE 3/24/2011  
S. additional exhibit

## **Chairman and Members of the House Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Committee:**

It is our understanding that the sponsor of SB 144, Senator John Brenden, at the House Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Committee hearing on March 17, 2011 suggested the Greater Yellowstone Coalition's position on free roaming bison from Yellowstone encompassed bison ranging as far as the Crazy Mountains north of Livingston. This is a serious misstatement of GYC's actual long-held and oft-repeated position on appropriate winter range for Yellowstone's bison herd.

In brief, Greater Yellowstone Coalition has advocated that the Gardiner Basin, up to Yankee Jim Canyon, be made available as winter range for Yellowstone bison ranging north out of the park. Our past efforts including the cooperative agreement with the Royal Teton Ranch to remove cattle from the ranch in winter and fencing projects with local landowners have been devoted to mitigating potential conflicts within the Gardiner Basin.

GYC and others see Yankee Jim Canyon as the obvious geographic limit for bison ranging north from Yellowstone. We have not advocated that bison move farther north in the Paradise Valley or to points even farther north including Livingston or the Crazy Mountains.

Our position on Gardiner Basin is spelled out in "Practical Solutions: a New Vision for Managing Yellowstone Bison" dated August, 2008 (available at [www.greateryellowstone.org](http://www.greateryellowstone.org)):

"Located north of Yellowstone National Park, the winter range of the Gardiner Basin offers bison a respite from the snow-bound interior of the park. Bison mainly migrate from the park's interior into the Gardiner Basin – the lands north of Yellowstone up to Yankee Jim Canyon – as conditions in the park make it difficult to break through to the forage underneath. Historically, the majority of bison removals occur at the northern boundary of the park at the Stephens Creek capture facility, managed by the National Park Service.

As a result of an agreement between the state of Montana and the Royal Teton Ranch (RTR), cattle no longer graze the RTR, opening up lands west of the Yellowstone River for bison. This agreement was made possible by the commitment of a broad spectrum of interests, including conservation and hunting organizations, concerned individuals and state and federal agencies. The state's agreement with RTR anticipates changes to the IBMP, providing management flexibility relative to allowable bison numbers, 'return' dates and management practices. With the RTR development, only two small herds of cattle graze in and around the Gardiner Basin. Creative, practical solutions can be implemented to manage the separation between bison and cattle for these remaining herds."

We appreciate the opportunity to correct impressions about our position on Yellowstone bison.

Mike Clark, Executive Director

March 22, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee:

My name is Lorents Grosfield, and I'm a cattle rancher from Big Timber (406-537-4489). I am in full support of SB 212 and feel that it is finally a proposal that can get the bison issue off dead center.

Since the National Park Service continues to refuse to manage the Yellowstone bison herd population for the forage available within the Park, and drags their feet with regard to disease eradication, I'm convinced that this issue will not end until Montana provides a solution.

The solution we have been using has sent diseased bison and bison over the population threshold to packing plants for distribution of quality protein meat to Indian tribes and to charities such as the Montana Food Bank Network. Despite having distributed some 600,000 pounds of meat to needy people in 2008 alone, this program has been distorted and demonized by interest groups and the media.

SB 212 provides a thoughtful framework for an alternative for at least some of the problem bison. Make no mistake, there is no way around the removal of bison from the landscape when their numbers exceed the carrying capacity of the available forage. I'm sure hunting will be part of the solution, and at least in the short term, I suspect the donation of meat to charities will also continue to be one of the tools used. This bill provides a responsible framework for another important tool which is planned and managed relocation. Certainly those bison that have met the quarantine protocols and tested clean could be relocated to acceptable tribal or other locations and make way for more bison to go through those quarantine protocols for later additional relocation.

But transplanting bison, ***including disease-free bison***, must be done only to acceptable locations where they can be successfully managed and contained in order to eliminate property damage and minimize public safety concerns. To a large extent, bison prefer the same habitat that we do, the lowlands and river corridors. This is where our towns are, most of our highways and interstates, our schools, our farmsteads, our croplands. Certainly none of us wants to see wild bison on our highways and interstates, especially not at night. Most landowners involved in agriculture do not want to see them on their property either. But there probably are areas, especially tribal areas that could work for relocation.

Some will tell you that the Montana Supreme Court decision called *Rathbone* from the 1940s requires landowners to accommodate wildlife on their property, but Supreme Court decisions are decided on the basis of the specific facts at hand. And the plain fact of *Rathbone*, which was an elk case, is that there was not a single wild bison on private land *anywhere in the entire United States*, and hadn't been for at least 50 years, and there was no expectation in the case that there ever would be. I submit that it's a big stretch to think that the Montana Supreme Court, *or any other state Supreme Court*, would now burden landowners with this kind of requirement. Bison are not elk and they are certainly not deer, and the property damage and public safety concerns are real and unavoidable without effective management.

SB 212 sets the stage for that kind of effective management, and I hope the Committee gives it strong support.

Mr. Chairman, I do have a few amendment suggestions that would clarify some of the language, which I hope the Committee will consider. I present them here in "Gray Bill" form. Thank you.

**Ted Washburn**

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**From:** "Darrell Geist" <z@wildrockies.org>  
**To:** <ted@tedwashburn.com>; <mikephillips@montana.net>; <mike4hd84@blackfoot.net>; <kenneth59@bresnan.net>; <connell4hd87@yahoo.com>; <hideaway@mt.net>; <cloney@q.com>; <skattumd@wisptest.net>; <max.yates.hd74@gmail.com>; <jesse59404@yahoo.com>; <bharris@midrivers.com>; <dougkary.hd48@gmail.com>; <dan@votetankennedy.com>; <austinfohouse@yahoo.com>; <cboland@mt.gov>; <rdriscoll@peoplepc.com>; <jl\_price@bresnan.net>; <franke.wilmer@gmail.com>; <vjchd52@yahoo.com>  
**Cc:** <z@wildrockies.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2011 9:35 PM  
**Subject:** Testimony on SB 184

Dear Chairman Ted Washburn and members of the House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on SB 184. Please share my testimony with Rep. Jeffrey Welborn for whom I have no contact for. I would also request that my testimony be entered into the hearing record and transcript. 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.

Our members, who come from all walks of life and from places all around the world, envision a life for buffalo in which they thrive within a state of inherent wildness. We also envision a world in which buffalo and all other native wildlife are given precedence on public land, and where buffalo herds remain as a self-regulating sustainable population, and a viable genetic source for the future evolutionary potential of the wildlife species.

I am also a resident of West Yellowstone and live year-round in the Hebgen basin where America's last wild buffalo roam.

**Buffalo Field Campaign is adamantly opposed to SB 184 for many reasons.**

SB 184 changes current law to mandate that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission issue tags for a hunt of wild buffalo with bows and arrows.

Buffalo Field Campaign opposes Montana's hunt of wild buffalo for "disease control" purposes taking the position of **NO HABITAT NO HUNT**.

**Montana has not provided habitat to sustain wild buffalo populations like our state has done for elk, among other wildlife species.**

**Montana has no business hunting an indigenous wildlife species for which the state does not provide habitat to sustain wild populations.**

Buffalo Field Campaign also objects to hunting wild buffalo with bows and arrows. In monitoring and observing the buffalo hunt in the Gardiner and Hebgen Lake basins it is rare for a buffalo to be killed by a hunter with one shot from a high powered rifle.

**If bow and arrow hunting is permitted it is a foregone outcome that injured buffalo will escape pursuit and end in up residential neighborhoods in Gardiner and West Yellowstone.**

Many people do not realize that the buffalo hunt takes place not far at all from neighborhoods,

residential villages, and towns. **Our communities do not need stressed buffalo injured by arrows who have to be tracked down and shot by game wardens, town police, and sheriffs.**

Thank you for showing common sense by voting to defeat SB 184.

Darrell Geist, Habitat Coordinator

Buffalo Field Campaign

PO Box 957

West Yellowstone MT 59758

phone: (406) 646-0070

fax: (406) 646-0071

email: <<mailto:z@wildrockies.org>>

<http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org/habitat.html>