EXHIBIT # 1
DATE 3/10/15
SB 284

BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN
P.O. BOX 957 WEST YELLOWSTONE, MONTANA 59758
(406) 646-0070 PHONE (406) 646-0071 FAX
http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org

March 3, 2015

Chairman Alan Redfield and members of the House Agriculture committee,
House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN COMMENTS ON SB 284 – DO NOT PASS

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Agriculture committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on SB 284. Mr. Chairman, I request that my testimony be entered into the hearing record. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign opposes SB 284 and the sponsor's attempt to cede state authority over wildlife to County Commissioner(s) control by requiring their approval before buffalo could be released or relocated in a county or counties in Montana.

SB 284 would also require County Commissioners to make certain findings that are arbitrary and capricious and designed to thwart a positive finding for transplanting or relocating buffalo in Montana.

SB 284 would remove authority for a state decision where all Montanan's have a represented interest to county commissioners who need not protect any Montanan's interest beyond the county line.

Wildlife in Montana belongs not to the state or any one person or interest group but to future generations who are the beneficiaries of the public 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. County commissioners have no comparable authority to uphold the state of Montana's public trust responsibility.

The state of Montana is a trustee for our wildlife – this duty should not be diminished by the Montana Legislature to benefit one body or interest group.

The Montana Legislature has already imposed costly unfunded mandates on any attempt to reintroduce buffalo as a wildlife species in the state. As MCA 87-1-216 stands, the legislature requires Montanan's to pay for the costs of fencing, animal identification and health protocols, containment measures, and imposes property and safety liability on the state. Despite an unfinished public process, the legislature has already decided the outcome of any plan to reintroduce buffalo as wildlife in Montana to require a fenced, domesticated herd.

In addition, HB 194, which passed the House for consideration in the Senate, requires taxpayers to foot the bill for a forage analysis costing Montanans $54,000 for every 100,000 acres under consideration or $540,000 for a million acres. The fact that not one dollar has been appropriated for a forage analysis suggests the Montana Legislature never intends to authorize funding for another mandate it has imposed upon the people of Montana to reintroduce buffalo as wildlife. SB 284 adds to these legislatively mandated burdens by imposing another insurmountable hurdle for recognizing buffalo as wildlife in our expansive state: county commissioner approval.

In poll after poll, the majority of Montanan's have made it clear that we favor restoration of wild buffalo including 70% of 400 registered voters polled by Moore Information in 2011 and nearly eight in ten of 500 Montana voters polled by Tulchin Research in 2014 support restoring wild buffalo populations on public lands (76% support) and on tribal lands (78% support). By a vast majority, Montanan's favor (72% support) wild buffalo being managed like wildlife, not livestock.

SB 284 is not amendable. Thank you for taking action to prevent the erosion of Montanan's ability to recover and save our natural wildlife heritage by voting against SB 284.

Daniel Brister, MS
Executive Director
Buffalo Field Campaign
PO Box 957
West Yellowstone MT 59758
Phone: (406) 646-0070
Fax: (406) 646-0071
Email: bfc@wildrockies.org

Let Buffalo Roam

www.buffalofieldcampaign.org

About Buffalo Field Campaign

Buffalo Field Campaign was founded in 1997 to protect the natural habitat of wild migratory buffalo and native wildlife, to stop the slaughter and harassment of America's last wild buffalo as well as to advocate for their lasting protection, 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, Idaho and Wyoming, 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 deeply concerned and actively involved in protecting the last remaining descendants of indigenous buffalo in North America to occupy their original range.

Buffalo Field Campaign publicizes the plight of the buffalo, works to end their slaughter by government agencies, and advocates for the long-term protection of viable populations of wild buffalo and year-round habitat.

Buffalo Field Campaign actively engages the American public to honor and protect our cultural heritage by allowing wild buffalo to exist as an indigenous wildlife species fulfilling their ecological role on their native landscape.

Buffalo Field Campaign volunteers patrol habitat where buffalo migrate within the Yellowstone and Madison River drainages. These direct experiences with buffalo on their native habitats inform our actions and strengthen our commitment to gaining permanent protections for America's last wild buffalo.