EXHIBIT # 5
DATE 3/10/15
SB 284

Montana Association of Conservation Districts

MACD Bison Concerns

Natural Resources ~ Bison Impacts ~ Economic

Natural Resource Concerns

-How will Bison be incorporated into established grazing management plans? Can dust wallows be accounted for within these plans? Will an expanded range of bison have an impact on exotic and invasive species suppression?
-How will Bison reintroduction impact sage grouse and other sensitive grassland bird species?
-What protections will be in place for riparian areas?

Before bison are introduced into an area or ranch, we would like to ensure that our efforts to suppress exotic and invasive species, work to improve and protect sage grouse and other grassland bird habitat, and rangeland management efforts are preserved. Bison need to be incorporated into these planning efforts before they are introduced.

Bison Impacts

-Who will be responsible for damages from bison? Who will be considered owner?
-Who will ensure that bison numbers do not exceed carrying capacity of ecosystem, particularly in light of reduced number of predators?
-Time, sweat, and money have been invested in improving and conserving the land. How will this effort be preserved or improved by putting bison on the landscape?
-In addition to brucellosis testing, how will natural resources concerns be addressed in order to assure there will not be economic and health implications for livestock and humans?

Concerns about impacts and responsibility being important aspects to consider from all perspectives to ensure there is clear understanding and agreement prior to any bison are introduced.

Economic Concerns

-What is a realistic assessment of economic improvements associated with bison related tourism?
-How would use of public lands for bison increase grazing pressure on private lands?
-Would bison populations provide similar food production for our growing population?
-What is the economic effect possible bison issues may have on the sustainability of local economies?

Our rural communities' economies are sensitive not only to small changes but also the prospect of change. It is important that the concerns people living in these communities have are fully understood and addressed.

The big sky and open land that lead people to reminisce about scenes of the past is intact due to ranchers who have stewarded the land, preserving our unique landscape and heritage. It is important to honor the conservation work, local knowledge, and lifestyle of our ranchers when considering changes to this land that sustains Montana and Montanans.