



## BISON DONATIONS REQUEST FORM

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



### A. PURPOSE

This Protocol describes the process for the donation of the available surplus bison from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service, we) to eligible organizations, Tribes, or intertribal organizations as outlined in regulations at 50 CFR 30.1, as well as Service Manual chapters 701 FW 5 and 701 FW 8. Surplus bison are offspring that exceed the ecological carrying capacity of the Service bison metapopulation. The primary purposes of donating these bison are to support conservation of the species as native North American wildlife and to assist in the restoration of bison herds on conservation partner lands, with special emphasis on restoring conservation herds to Tribal lands.

In 2020, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) published the Bison Conservation Initiative (the 2020 Initiative), recognizing bison as a wildlife species in need of conservation. Consistent with this Initiative, Service policy identifies the ecological and cultural values of bison as nationally and/or historically significant animals.

### B. AUTHORITIES

- National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 668dd and 668ee; as amended)
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act (Public Law 95-341)
- Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638, as amended)
- Surplus Range Animals (50 CFR 30.1)
- Disposition of Surplus Range Animals (50 CFR 30.2)
- Native American Policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (510 FW 1)
- Fenced Animal Management policy (701 FW 8.11)
- Collections, Donations, and Disposals policy (701 FW 5)

### C. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL INTEREST

The 2010 Bison Conservation Genetics Workshop: Report and Recommendations (2010 Report) identifies DOI bison herds as a valuable source with which to start new conservation herds proposed by other Federal, state/provincial, or Tribal governments. The DOI Bison Report: Looking Forward (2014 Report) acknowledges the challenges to achieving bison restoration on DOI lands and emphasizes the importance of partnerships for achieving bison conservation and ecological restoration. Both the 2010 and 2014 Reports also identify the potential for bison herds maintained by Indian Tribes to contribute to species conservation, and the Service recognizes that such bison may also support Tribal cultural rights and practices.

Periodic reduction in the size of Service bison herds is required to remain within the ecological carrying capacity of Service lands. Live bison capture and removal assists in the restoration of bison to Tribal lands, supports the efforts of states and other conservation organizations, and ensures that the ecological needs of other species are met on limited-size refuges. To support maximum conservation of genetic diversity within and across Service herds, selection of young bison available for donation is coordinated across all refuges. From the surplus bison made available for donation from refuges, requests will be prioritized for bison restoration and conservation purposes.

### D. PROVIDED BY THE SERVICE UNDER THIS PROTOCOL

The Service will estimate the total number of bison that exceed ecological carrying capacity after achieving Service conservation genetics goals, using the best population information available including the number of calves born and the number of mortalities that occurred after the most recent bison capture operation.

We will randomly select a representative percentage of apparently healthy bison for donation from the total group of surplus offspring exceeding the Service ecological carrying capacity. While we do our best to estimate the bison available for donation, variation may occur in the age, sex or in the total number of bison actually available for donation, depending on the difference between actual population demographics and estimates made prior to the bison capture operation.

We will provide the sex, age, and any identification information such as microchip number (also called "PIT tags") and/or official eartag number at the time of bison pickup from the refuge. We will ensure humane care of donated bison held in the facility prior to loadout, including feed and water, until the date of pickup.

The Service does not vaccinate or provide therapeutic treatment for bison, and veterinary testing may vary between refuges and across years. The Service will arrange for and provide Certificates of Veterinary Inspection as required for interstate transport by State Animal Health Authorities. The Service makes no certification as to the suitability of any animal for human consumption.

**E. THE \_\_\_\_\_ UNDERSTANDS THAT:**  
Requesting Organization, Tribe or Intertribal Organization

Humane treatment of bison is essential, including handling, transport and general care of all bison received, regardless of the specific purpose for which they are used. Any questions regarding handling, transport or care of bison may be discussed with the Service's Wildlife Health Office or the Project Leader prior to receiving them.

The Service must be informed of the destination state for donated bison no less than 30 days prior to scheduled bison capture operation to allow the Service time to meet interstate transport regulatory testing requirements. The Service must be informed of the destination physical address for donated bison no less than 10 days prior to scheduled bison loadout to facilitate timely completion of required interstate veterinary permit applications and Certificates of Veterinary Inspection.

Bison should be claimed and removed from the refuge according to guidelines and timeframes issued by the Refuge Manager. The Service does not provide transportation, and the donation recipient arranges for and assumes all costs for transportation. Unclaimed bison will be donated to other organizations, sold through a public auction, or returned to the refuge herd.

Transport equipment must be thoroughly cleaned prior to entering the refuge to reduce the risk of introducing invasive species or infectious disease. Vehicles or trailers with unclean beds will not be permitted on the refuge.

**F. IT IS MUTUALLY UNDERSTOOD BY BOTH PARTIES THAT:**

Bison are wild animals. Handling and transport of bison can be dangerous regardless of the age or sex of the animal. Ensuring human safety is essential.

Animal welfare is a high priority. Handling and transport of bison for any purpose will be done in a manner that results in the lowest stress possible for the bison. Transport equipment must be sturdy, well ventilated, and sufficiently enclosed to prevent bison from seeing outside the trailer during transport. A dark environment with minimal outside visual stimuli reduces stress. Bison must be transported in segregated groups of similar size, age, sex, and behavior. Bison exhibiting aggressive or dominant behavior must be transported separately from other bison.

No guarantee of pregnancy or reproductive performance is given or implied. Female bison have been exposed to bulls and yearling pregnancies can occasionally occur, but female bison do not generally breed until two years of age. Yearlings are approximately 16 months old but may vary several months in actual age and size.

Donated bison should be used for the purposes specified in this Protocol. Donation recipients found to be in violation of this Protocol will be ineligible for future donations.

A **conservation herd** is defined for the purposes of this Protocol, consistent with that provided by 701 FW 5.3B, as a free-ranging (freely occupying habitat adequate in size and quality to provide for all biological needs and allowed to reproduce freely) population. A herd that routinely requires supplemental forage (hay or other feed not occurring naturally within the habitat) does not meet the conservation herd criteria. Recipients of bison donated for conservation purposes will provide documentation that their project or program meets the definition of a conservation herd as defined in this Protocol.

Non-governmental conservation organizations requesting donated bison to establish or augment a herd must demonstrate charitable status and contribution to the public resource.

Educational and research organizations requesting donated bison must demonstrate the educational contribution of the donation to increasing public knowledge and appreciation of the wildlife values of bison.

The Service has a standardized general health monitoring program for bison. Any questions regarding herd health status can be answered by the Service's Wildlife Health Office at [nwrs\\_bison\\_donations@fws.gov](mailto:nwrs_bison_donations@fws.gov).

A total of \_\_\_\_\_ bison are requested for donation from \_\_\_\_\_ National Wildlife Refuge. These bison will be used to/for (requestor enters the number of bison for each option listed or percentage of total donation request):

#	or	%	
_____		_____	Establish a free-ranging conservation herd
_____		_____	Supplement or augment a free-ranging conservation herd
_____		_____	Establish a self-sustaining herd for non-conservation purposes
_____		_____	Supplement or augment a self-sustaining herd for non-conservation purposes
_____		_____	Public display, educational purposes and/or research
_____		_____	Tribal spiritual or cultural purposes
_____		_____	Other: _____

#### G. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Completed forms must be received by the Service's Wildlife Health Office by August 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Please submit the completed forms via email or U.S. Postal Service to:

NWRS Bison Donations  
USFWS - Wildlife Health Office  
10 E. Babcock, Rm 105  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
Email: [nwrs\\_bison\\_donations@fws.gov](mailto:nwrs_bison_donations@fws.gov)

#### H. SIGNATURES

Both parties have read and understand this Protocol for donation of Service bison.

_____ Signature at Donation Request Organization, Tribal, or Intertribal Official	_____ Date	_____ # of Bison Requested
_____ Signature at Donation Approval Assistant Regional Director, Region _____	_____ Date	_____ # of Bison Approved
_____ Signature at Bison Pickup Refuge Official	_____ Date	_____ # of Bison Donated

## NOTICES

### PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service collects information necessary to determine eligibility to receive donated available surplus bison. Your response is voluntary, but is required to obtain or retain a benefit. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1018-0190.

### ESTIMATED BURDEN STATEMENT

We estimate public reporting for this collection of information to average 30 minutes for reporting and 30 minutes for recordkeeping, including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of the form to the Service Information Clearance Officer, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: PRB (JAO/3W), Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or via email at [Info\\_Coll@fws.gov](mailto:Info_Coll@fws.gov). Please do not send your completed form to this address.