



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

**MAY 11 2012**

Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs  
Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management  
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service  
Director, National Park Service

From: Secretary *Ken Salazar*

Subject: Directive on the Placement of Yellowstone Bison

Sec. 1 **Purpose.** The purpose of this Directive is to develop viable short and long term solutions to migrating bison and to examine the feasibility of the relocation of these bison to suitable Federal or tribal lands.

Sec. 2 **Background.** The Department of the Interior (DOI) is engaged in the development of a Bison Conservation Initiative (Initiative) with a goal of restoring bison to their historic, ecological, and cultural places on appropriate landscapes. Bison in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are currently managed by the National Park Service (NPS), state, and Federal partners in accordance with the 2000 Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP).

Sec. 3 **Directive.**

Part I: Relocation of Certified Brucellosis-free Yellowstone Origin Bison

The State of Montana has successfully quarantined two herds of bison that consistently test negative for brucellosis; approximately 65 bison at the Corwin Springs (Slip and Slide) Ranch and approximately 143 bison at the Turner Green Ranch. The State of Montana recently relocated the Corwin Springs herd to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana.

The Governor has requested that the DOI assist in relocating to DOI lands in Montana some of the Turner Green Ranch bison that have satisfied the quarantine protocol.

Through this Directive, the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and NPS will evaluate the feasibility of using lands managed by DOI in Montana for relocation of bison currently quarantined at the Turner Green Ranch.

Working closely with NPS, the FWS will evaluate the option of introducing Turner Green Ranch Yellowstone bison to the National Bison Range (NBR). The evaluation will analyze the

effects of this potential action to long-term bison metapopulation management; potential value to the existing NBR bison herd management strategy; potential effects to other NBR wildlife; and how such potential action would contribute to the Initiative. Such evaluation will consider the ongoing discussions between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the FWS regarding bison management at NBR.

By September 1, 2012, each of the above-named DOI bureaus will provide an evaluation to me that contains an analysis of the NBR to determine how many Turner Green Ranch bison could be accommodated; infrastructure needs; and any other relevant factors. The evaluation will be done in consultation with appropriate tribes in accordance with DOI's Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes issued on December 1, 2011 (DOI Consultation Policy).

#### Part II: Relocation of Certified Brucellosis-free Yellowstone Bison

By September 1, 2012, DOI bureaus will complete the following actions:

A. DOI officials will begin consultation with tribes to identify and evaluate opportunities for short and long-term relocations of bison to tribal lands in accordance with the DOI Consultation Policy. The BIA will notify all tribes within the historical range of Yellowstone bison of this consultation and establish a process for conducting said consultation in accordance with the DOI Consultation Policy.

B. The BIA will coordinate further with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Montana state veterinarian to explore the establishment of a bison herd from Yellowstone bison stocks on the Flathead Reservation.

C. The NPS will explore developing and operating additional quarantine facilities for Yellowstone bison.

D. The NPS, FWS, and BLM will explore preliminary options for relocating and managing bison on appropriate Federal lands in areas where bison historically ranged.

By December 1, 2012, DOI bureaus will complete the following actions:

A. Based on the tribal consultation described above, the BIA shall report to me on all efforts to assist tribes in Montana and in other states that are interested in receiving bison.

B. Based on the above preliminary evaluations and any additional direction received in response to those evaluations, the FWS, NPS, and BLM are directed to begin planning to relocate to DOI lands, within and outside of Montana, certified brucellosis-free Yellowstone bison.

C. The BIA and NPS, in coordination with the state veterinarian for Wyoming, will explore the option of locating bison on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and provide me with a preliminary evaluation of this option.

D. The NPS, in consultation with tribes and in coordination with affected state agencies and the appropriate state veterinarians, will explore the feasibility and provide a preliminary evaluation to me of relocating bison to other appropriate national park lands.

#### Part III: Establishment of the DOI Bison Leadership Team (Team)

The Team is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Directive. The Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks will lead the Team which will be comprised of the leadership of the NPS, FWS, BIA, and BLM.

The Bison Conservation and Management Initiative Working Group (Working Group) created in 2008 will provide technical support to the Team. A representative from the BIA will be (re)appointed to the Working Group and representatives of USDA-Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and any other interested Federal land managing agencies, tribes, and states will be invited to participate in the Working Group.

#### Part IV. Implementation of Directive

Implementation of this Directive will be in accordance with all applicable federal law and regulation, including any applicable environmental or planning requirements.

cc: Deputy Secretary  
Chief of Staff