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**AMERICAN PRAIRIE RESERVE PARTNERS WITH NATIVE NATIONS TO FURTHER
BISON CONSERVATION**

Genetically diverse bison help other conservation herds maintain health and resiliency

American Prairie is pleased to announce it has collaborated with representatives of Native Nations in South Dakota to relocate 39 bison from its conservation herd in Central Montana to help further efforts to restore this native mammal to the landscape and create cultural and economic opportunities.

This week, 35 bison were transferred from American Prairie to the Rosebud Sioux's Wolakota Buffalo Range near Mission, South Dakota. Another four bison were shipped to One Spirit, a non-profit organization that serves the Lakota people of the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota.

The Montana-based non-profit often distributes bison to organizations starting new herds and to enhance the genetic health of conservation and tribal herds around the country. American Prairie is one of only a handful of conservation bison herds in North America that are free of cattle gene introgression.

According to Alison Fox, CEO of American Prairie, the organization prioritizes distributing bison to Native Nations with active and well-managed bison restoration programs.

"We prioritize partnerships with Native tribes who are working to restore a deeper cultural, spiritual, and economic connection to the animal," said Fox. "Our bison set the gold-standard for genetics and it's our goal to share with those who have a similar vision of moving bison conservation forward."

Wolakota's goal is to become home to 1,500 bison, which would make it the largest tribally managed bison herd in the United States. American Prairie has agreed to distribute up to 170 total bison in support of that effort.

"Wolakota is showing what is possible when public and private partners come together in support of Native-led efforts," said Wizipan Little Elk, CEO of the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation, who oversees the project. "The partnership with American Prairie will allow us to accelerate our cultural, ecological, and economic impact."

Since 2009, American Prairie has distributed more than 400 bison to conservation and tribal herds in Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, Arizona, South Dakota and Oklahoma. That includes sending bison in 2011, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 to the Blackfeet Nation, the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, and the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Montana.

Bronc Speak Thunder helps manage the Fort Belknap bison program and says American Prairie's program of distributing bison helps Tribal leaders maintain a healthy herd on their reservation.

"The return of the buffalo to our lands is a common goal and vision shared with tribal elders, the tribal council, wildlife managers and spiritual leaders," said Speak Thunder. "The bison provided by American Prairie have diverse and pure genetics and help to improve the long-term health of our herd."

American Prairie's bison donations are a part of the organization's [semi-annual bison handling operation](#).

According to Scott Heidebrink, Senior Bison Restoration Manager, bison handling is a necessary management tool done to monitor overall herd health, test for disease, comply with state and federal regulations, and to maintain appropriate stocking rates.

"We manage the animals as wildlife to the extent possible, but our bison handling is done as needed to maintain the health of the herd, monitor for any problems, and demonstrate our commitment to being good neighbors," said Heidebrink.

The 39 bison transferred this week cleared all necessary disease testing protocols prior to being shipped. That included expanded disease management protocols required by a



recently authorized collaborative agreement with the Phillips County Conservation District.

American Prairie's bison herd currently numbers approximately 800 and is spread across three management units, Sun Prairie, Dry Fork, and White Rock. In addition, American Prairie provides grass for local ranchers by leasing grazing for approximately 13,000 head of cattle on its properties in Phillips, Valley, Fergus, Blaine, and Petroleum counties.

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About American Prairie Reserve

American Prairie Reserve's vision is to create a vast and collaboratively-managed prairie destination that serves as a fully functioning ecosystem for wildlife, and offers visitors permanent access to the landscape that shaped our nation's character. When complete, the Reserve will be larger than Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks combined, and will support wildlife species that historically called the Great Plains home. Already open to the public for recreation including camping and hunting, the Reserve offers visitors an opportunity to connect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at americanprairie.org.

About Wolakota Buffalo Range

The Wolakota Buffalo Range is a 28,000-acre cattle to bison conversion on the lands of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate, which is also known as the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The project is one year in to a five-year build up that will make it the largest Native-owned and managed bison herd in the world. Wolakota is a social impact project with cultural, ecological, and economic impact targets. For more information visit rosebudbuffalo.org.