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**AMERICAN PRAIRIE RECEIVES FINAL APPROVAL FOR BISON GRAZING PLAN**  
*Final decision restores wildlife, improves land health, and complies with all laws*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has given American Prairie final approval to graze bison across 63,500 acres of federal public lands in Phillips County.

This is the third time American Prairie has been authorized to modify federal grazing permits to allow bison to graze a portion of their historic range in north central Montana. The BLM has longstanding legal authority to change grazing permits to substitute different types of livestock for cattle, including bison.

American Prairie's CEO Alison Fox says the final record of decision (ROD) recognizes that bison benefit native wildlife, restore water quality, and will improve rangeland conditions in north central Montana.

"After four years of comprehensive analysis and public comment, we are extremely pleased the BLM has approved this grazing application," said Fox. "This decision is grounded in sound science, complies with all local, state, and federal laws, and recognizes the important ways bison grazing has and will continue to improve rangeland health."

**Management Impacts**

The final ROD allows American Prairie to graze bison behind fences on six BLM allotments in Phillips County where it holds grazing leases. One common allotment grazed with another livestock operator would remain approved for cattle-only grazing. Seasonal grazing would be permitted on four of the allotments. Year-round grazing would be permitted on three allotments; two of which had been previously authorized for



year-round bison grazing. There would be no change in AUMs on any of the allotments. It also authorizes American Prairie to remove roughly 30 miles of interior fencing to better accommodate wildlife movement and the grazing preferences of bison.

American Prairie estimates the final decision will facilitate the sustainable growth of their private conservation herd of bison from approximately 800 animals to 1,000 animals by 2025. By comparison, the majority of American Prairie's land base is leased out to local cattle ranchers and supports over 10,000 head of cattle.

According to American Prairie's Vice President and Chief External Relations Officer Pete Geddes, any new bison grazing will comply with all federal, state, and county laws. That includes a comprehensive disease management agreement that was unanimously approved by Phillips County officials and American Prairie in 2020.

"The health of our herd is just as important to us as the health of the agricultural communities of Montana," said Geddes. "We look forward to collaborating with Phillips County to uphold our robust disease management agreement.

### **Improved land health and new jobs**

The BLM's [Environmental Analysis](#), published in 2021, concluded that American Prairie's grazing application would have no significant impact on the land or local ranching economy. The EA predicts the decision will benefit local wildlife, improve land and water quality, and create new jobs.

*"Moreover, those areas being grazed by bison will experience improvements to vegetative communities including variation in vegetative communities, diversified vegetation and an increase in native plant species... This will improve habitat conditions for aquatic and riparian wildlife species, such as amphibians and riparian birds, by increasing the availability of habitat features, such as canopy cover and nesting sites, due to increased riparian vegetation diversity and abundance,"* reads the proposed decision.

In addition, the BLM predicts the proposed action will have numerous positive effects for local industry:

*"Implementation of the proposed change in use would result in a gain of the equivalent of four full-time jobs at the county level (up from 24 jobs under Alternative A to 28 jobs under Alternative B), while labor income, value added, and total output would all see increases at the county level. The modest job gains would occur in the industry categories of veterinary services, crop farming, and non-cattle animal production."*



## **History and Public Support**

The [final record of decision](#) is based on a comprehensive public process which included five public meetings and the collection of over 5,000 public comments. In addition, American Prairie updated its application in 2019 based on conversations with local cattle producers to better reflect conditions on the ground.

Since 2018, American Prairie's grazing application has received support from wildlife organizations, hunting groups, property rights advocates, and tribal leaders. Supporters include the National Wildlife Federation, Property and Environmental Research Center, Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Montana Wildlife Federation, and thousands of individuals from Montana and every corner of America.

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## **About American Prairie**

American Prairie'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. Already open to the public for recreation including camping and hunting, American Prairie offers visitors an opportunity to connect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at [americanprairie.org](http://americanprairie.org).