



## The National Bison Legacy Act Talking Points

### Basic Background

- The National Bison Association, Intertribal Buffalo Council and Wildlife Conservation Society have established a coalition to designate bison as the National Mammal of the U.S.
- Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) and Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) introduced the National Bison Legacy Act on May 24, which would designate the North American bison as the National Mammal and recognize its place in the country's cultural, economic and ecological heritage.
- A bipartisan group of 12 Senators from Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas, North Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Ohio, and New York is currently supporting the bill.
- A coalition of bison producers, tribal representatives and conservationists also plan to celebrate the First Thursday each November as National Bison Day (November 1<sup>st</sup> this year).

### Why this Campaign? Why Now?

- With the 100 year anniversary of the American Bison Society, the members were reconvened to discuss the successes of the last century and the challenges ahead.
- One of the recommendations was to rise above the current discourse and elevate bison to its appropriate stature as a national symbol of freedom and self determination.
- The coalition recommended that a federal bill be crafted to recognize bison as the national mammal to bring together all the various stakeholders who share a common interest in bison and begin to find ways to work together for the greater good.

### Why Bison

- As an American icon, bison are:
  - The largest land mammal;
  - profiled on coins;
  - designated as the state mammal of Wyoming, Oklahoma, and Kansas;
  - depicted on the Department of the Interior's seal; and
  - featured on logos of sports teams, businesses, and academic institutions.

- Designating the bison as the National Mammal would celebrate the animal's special place in our national heritage, as well as the contributions bison make to American life now and will for centuries to come.
- The bison would join the ranks of the bald eagle (National Emblem), rose (National Flower), and oak tree (National Tree) as an official symbol of our nation.

### **Bison Messaging**

- The campaign to make bison the National Mammal of the United States is in recognition of the important role that bison have played throughout American history and a celebration of that role.
- The public is encouraged to "Vote Bison" on the campaign web site to ask their Senators and Representatives to support the initiative.
- Bison have an iconic place in the country's cultural, economic and ecological heritage.
- Bison historically ranged throughout most of the country and are now found in all 50 states.
- There are approximately 20,000 bison in U.S. public herds, 198,000 bison in private production herds, and 15,000 bison in Native American herds.
- Bison are a symbol of the American West and the American spirit of self determination.
- Historical efforts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by a diverse group of stakeholders including Teddy Roosevelt saved bison from extinction.
- Commercial hunting for hides and meat reduced the bison population to about 1,000 animals by the turn of the 20th century.
- A new era of natural resource conservation emerged as a result of the destruction of bison and the efforts to save them. The recovery of the American bison represents one of the first conservation stories and inspired the nation to consider making room for wildlife.
- As reflected in the make-up of the coalition, the recovery and promotion of bison in America is the result of the combined efforts of conservationists, private ranchers and Native American Tribes.
- Today, more than 60 members of the Intertribal Buffalo Council work to restore bison to over 1 million acres of Indian lands.
- Bison have a connection to the economic, physical and spiritual lives of Native Americans.

- The current economic condition of bison production is at its strongest in history (over 4,000 ranches with an estimated total value of more than \$250 million in 2011);
- Bison as a food source is a healthy, low cholesterol, alternative to other types of meat.
- Bison ranchers are dedicated to protecting the integrity of this species as they expand their herds and connect with American consumers.
- Bison are valuable as a game animal for the sporting public. In a remarkable comeback, bison are now hunted recreationally in public herds in four western states.
- Public bison herds throughout the country offer enjoyment and education opportunities to both adults and children, while increasing tourism in rural communities.
- The American public has been a strong partner in the recovery of bison through their support of public herds and through their increasing incorporation of bison into their diets.