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## **Wildlife and Conservation Groups Call on Governor to Implement Emergency Actions to end Bison Hazing and Killing**

*Groups Ask Governor to Provide Leadership to Protect Remaining Bison*

BOZEMAN, Mont. – Today, local, state, regional and national organizations called on Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer to provide leadership that will protect the remaining Yellowstone bison, in light of the unabated loss of over half the herd. This call on the Governor follows Tuesday's IBMP partner announcement that bison hazing near West Yellowstone begins today.

The groups outlined a series of steps that can be implemented immediately to provide bison with needed habitat and tolerance west of Yellowstone National Park. Specifically, the groups call on Governor Schweitzer to convene an emergency meeting of the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) partners to consider and, using the adaptive management clause, adopt emergency provisions that will immediately end the hazing this year. The governor has the ability to lead the implementation of emergency bison management under the adaptive management authority provided in the IBMP.

“Right now Montana needs a leader to step up and provide Montana solutions,” said Amy McNamara, national parks program director for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. “Governor Schweitzer has demonstrated time and again that he can think outside the box to provide solutions that work for Montana and this is an opportunity for him to do that once again.”

“The governor has said publicly that the IBMP is not working and that we need lasting solutions that will protect Montana's livestock industry and end the annual slaughter of Yellowstone's bison,” said Tim Stevens, Yellowstone program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. “We are calling on the governor to immediately implement solutions that will ensure that the bison seeking habitat and forage west of Yellowstone will be provided tolerance and flexibility until they naturally return to the park once the snow has melted and green up in the park begins.”

A harsh winter that refuses to let up has led to the largest loss of bison since the herds were brought back from the brink of extinction in the early 1900s. Since November over

1,700 bison have been killed or removed from the Yellowstone herd. In addition, Yellowstone National Park estimates that at least 700 bison have been lost to winter kill during the harshest winter the region has seen in over a decade. “All told, over half of Yellowstone’s bison population has been lost this winter—a devastating blow to this unique resource,” said Mike Leahy, Rocky Mountain Region director of Defenders of Wildlife.

“Historically, Montana has demonstrated wisdom and leadership in restoring imperiled wildlife populations,” said Craig Sharpe, executive director of the Montana Wildlife Federation. “Montana is once again in need of leadership to maintain the heritage and unique genetics of this iconic native wildlife population. Governor Schweitzer is the individual with the will, the power and the ability to right this ship that has gone dramatically off course.”

Individuals, groups and newspapers across the state have been calling for leadership in managing the herd and providing sensible solutions to the killing. “Just as Horse Butte residents are welcoming bison to West Yellowstone, bison walked down Gardiner’s streets for the first time in 11 years, and we welcome them as well,” said Carolyn Duckworth of Bear Creek Council. “Many jobs in our town and West Yellowstone depend on wildlife and the people who appreciate them; it is impossible to explain to visitors why the icons of America are slaughtered right outside of the world’s first national park.”

In a report released this spring, the Government Accountability Office showed that despite eight years and \$16 million spent since 2002, the Interagency Bison Management Plan is failing to allow bison to range freely outside of Yellowstone National Park. The report pointed to the IBMP agencies’ failure to utilize the adaptive management provision of the plan and encouraged the agencies to implement changes using this provision. “We believe the governor and the federal agencies have all the authority they need to implement emergency adaptive management solutions immediately,” said Steve Torbit, Regional Executive Director for the National Wildlife Federation. “The clock is ticking and we need action.”

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*Founded in 1983, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition works with people and communities to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations.*

*Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its 340,000 members, and many partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation’s natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.*

*Montana Wildlife Federation has been advocating for wildlife, wildlife habitat, and Montana's rich heritage of hunting and angling. Formed in 1936, MWF has been a leading voice for sensible wildlife management, and for hunters and anglers.*

*Founded in 1936, the mission of the National Wildlife Federation is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future.*

*Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. We work to protect and restore America's native wildlife, safeguard habitat, resolve conflicts, work across international borders and educate and mobilize the public.*

*Bear Creek Council is a group of people in the Gardiner, Mont. area working to conserve and protect the integrity of our environment and community.*