



Hazing of Bison Unreasonable and Uncalled For

After a spring when the largest numbers of wild bison were sent to slaughter since the buffalo trade days, nearly 2000 animals, the Montana Stockgrowers Association filed legal action against the State of Montana asking for more hazing of bison; this time off private property back across the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Montana Wildlife Federation and hunters from across the state are calling the legal action needless, short-sighted posturing, and unreasonable not only in regard to bison welfare but also at the same time that other groups are trying to work on adaptive management.

“It’s clear that the Montana Stockgrowers don’t want any bison in Montana or reasonable, adaptive management that treats the state’s wildlife like wildlife,” said Ben Lamb, Montana Wildlife Federation’s Director of Conservation. After a small step forward in bison management this spring with the announcement of the purchase of grazing rights on the Royal Teton Ranch, the Montana Stockgrowers Association filed a Writ of Mandamus to force the Department of Livestock into hazing bison off of private property on Horse Butte despite no cattle in the area, and acceptance of bison on the Butte by the landowner.

“It’s unbelievable that the Stockgrowers would stoop to such a low level by filing a lawsuit against the DOL,” noted Lamb. “The Stockgrowers are encouraging the violation of private property rights as well as trying to undermine sincere efforts by moderate groups to give bison a little breathing room instead of sending them off to slaughter, or hazed back into the Park,” he continued.

“This is just another example of how the Interagency Bison Management Plan is flawed, when a lone group can hold up progress when there is no imminent disease threat and a landowner is accepting of the animals -- there needs to be a serious discussion about what adaptive management means, what it looks like and whether the IBMP can ever work,” added Lamb.