

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

Request for Proposals

For

Disposition of Quarantine Facility

Bison

Submitted by:

FORT PECK ASSINIBOINE & SIOUX TRIBES

TURTLE MOUND BUFFALO RANCH

WHEREAS, The Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board is the duly elected body representing the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation and is empowered to act on behalf of the Tribes, All actions shall be adherent to provisions set forth in the 1960 Constitution and by-laws, and

WHEREAS, the Fort Peck Tribes Turtle Mound Buffalo Ranch has leased range units 62, 63, and 67 to house Genetically Pure Buffalo from Yellowstone National Park, and

WHEREAS, the Buffalo Ranch presently have 37 head of Yellowstone Buffalo, and

WHEREAS, the carrying capacity for range units 62, 63 and 67 is 300 head, and

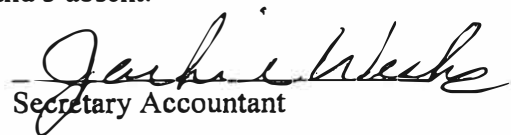
WHEREAS, the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is seeking proposals from Agencies, Organizations and Tribes with interest and capability to house/hold brucellosis-free bison from Yellowstone National Park , and

WHEREAS, the Buffalo Ranch request to the Tribal; Executive Board to submit a proposal to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to except the Yellowstone buffalo that are currently being held on the Ted Turner Ranch, so

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Tribal Executive Board hereby approves of the Tribes Buffalo Ranch to submit a proposal to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Park to take the Yellowstone at the Turner Ranch.

CERTIFICATION

I, THE UNDERSIGNED Secretary/Accountant of the Tribal Executive Board of the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes of the Fort peck Reservation, hereby certify that the Tribal Executive Board is composed of 12 voting members of whom 10 constituting a quorum, were present at a Special meeting duly called and convened this 14th day of April, 2014 , that the forgoing resolution was duly adopted at such meeting by an affirmative vote of 9 for and 3 absent.


Secretary Accountant

APPROVED :


A.T. Stafne, Chairman
Fort Peck Tribal Executive Board

**FORT PECK ASSINIBOINE & SIOUX TRIBES
PROPOSAL FOR
DISPOSITION OF QUARANTINE FACILITY BISON**

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSAL

The Fort Peck Tribes hereby submit to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks a proposal requesting acquisition of genetically pure bison that are brucellosis-free and originated from Yellowstone National Park. More specifically, these bison are a result of a bison quarantine feasibility study conducted by the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), as described in the bison quarantine feasibility study phase II/III .

The Fort Peck Tribes would like to provide a home for all the bison that are currently being held at Ted Turner's Green Ranch near Bozeman, Montana that are available for translocation. The Fort Peck Tribes are willing to incur all costs to transport them to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation (FPIR) where they will then be managed as wildlife. The Fort Peck Tribes now have 137 head of bison that are managed as two distinct bison herds, one is managed for business purposes and the other is for cultural purposes. The business herd and the cultural herd each have their own fenced range units to reside on. The Tribes have designated three range units on the reservation for managing the Yellowstone bison. The tribes have been acquiring these range units for the bison program since 2008 and the Yellowstone bison are considered the seed of the tribes' new cultural herd. Two of the three range units have already been fenced with a high tensile fence (electric) and/or wildlife friendly fencing. Fencing of the last range unit (range unit 67 see map on page 11) will began in May of 2014. Water sources for these range units consist of solar-powered water wells, man-made stock dams, artesian wells, springs and creeks. The tribes have developed a "Business and Management Plan" for both the business and the cultural bison herd. An "Emergency Preparedness & Response Plan" for the Potential Outbreak of a Foreign Animal Disease on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation has also been developed and adopted. The Tribes Natural Resources Department is governed by the Fort Peck Tribes Land use Policy which addresses agricultural leasing, permitting, and grazing requirements. The Tribes carry liability insurance on their bison in the event that problems should arise. In 2012 the Fort Peck Tribes entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks transferring bison that originated from Yellowstone National Park to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. This proposal will address each of the points listed in the request for proposals document as completely as possible to ensure further consideration.

The Fort Peck Tribes Fish and Wildlife Department oversees the Turtle Mound Bison Ranch. The Fish & Wildlife Director is Robert Magnan and he can be reached at (406) 768-5305 or call his cell phone at (406) 768-7270. The mailing address is P. O. Box 1027 Poplar, Montana 59255. Mr. Magnan's email address is robertm@nemont.net

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
PROPOSAL FOR DISPOSITION OF QUARANTINE FACILITY BISON**

The Fort Peck Indian Reservation is located in the northeastern portion of Montana and is home to the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes. The Fort Peck Indian Reservation is 2.1 million acres in size and has three different types of land ownership, tribal land (tribes are owners), allotted lands (individual tribal members own these lands) and fee lands (lands with a fee patent). The landownership consists of 926,000 acres that is in trust status and 1,074,100 acres in fee lands. The Fort Peck Tribes membership is approximately 13,126 enrolled members of which approximately 6,323 members reside on the reservation. The tribe are purchasing land on the reservation that are currently in fee status, and have prioritized specific types of land for purchase under the Department of Interior's land buy-back program, including those tracts in and around the tribes buffalo range units.

In the year 2000 the Fort Peck Tribes decided to bring back the buffalo to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation after a 135 year absence. By bringing the buffalo back to their homelands the tribes hoped to reconnect to their spiritual, traditional and cultural ways. The majority of our people have been forced to abandon traditional diets rich in wild game, bison and local native plants. Native Americans currently suffer from high rates of type 2 diabetes. Many of our Indian people are becoming addicted to illegal and prescription drugs, alcoholism is a serious issue, tribal youth need to start walking the red road, as the road they're on now is getting them into serious trouble and often involves gang activities. Adult men and women are not learning the traditional ways of taking care of their families. Native American people have developed a strong spiritual and cultural respect for bison that has not diminished with the passage of time. Spiritually the bison are our family, spirit guides and leaders. Physically they are our sustenance, as their meat was a primary source of food. Bison also provided shelter, clothing, sacred objects and essential tools for our ancestors. Reconnecting to our relatives, the bison, can help restore balance and our place in the circle of life.

100 bison were purchased from the Fort Belknap Tribes in the year 2000 and they became the tribes' business/cultural herd. The business aspect began with a lot of success through the first five (5) years because bison hunts became very popular. The cultural aspect began with just a few being donated for traditional purposes, however within the next three (3) years the Tribes Elderly Program, Diabetic Program, the reservations two homeless shelters, the Assiniboiné's Medicine Lodge, the Sioux's Sun Dance, summer pow-wow groups and educational programs started requesting donations for bison. By 2010 the tribes were donating twenty-six (26) bison a year to these groups for cultural purposes. As a result fewer animals were available for hunts and the Bison Ranch's business venture began losing income and could not generate enough revenue to pay for the leasing of allotted lands for the bison to graze and the tribal council was obligated to assist in paying grazing leases for the bison program.

In 2008 the Fort Peck Tribes wanted to develop a cultural herd of bison that would be separate from the tribes business herd. The cultural herd would consist of bison from Yellowstone National Park and the business herd would consist of bison that the tribes already have. The cultural herd would be used for spiritual, traditional, cultural and educational needs of the tribes' membership. The tribes' new cultural herd will be managed as a conservation herd. The conservation herd can also be viewed by tourists coming through the area to generate tourism and associated revenue. In August of 2008 the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) submitted a letter of interest for quarantine bison to the Inter-Agency Bison Management Plan (IBMP) Program, which is in charge of the management of bison at Yellowstone National Park. In the Letter of Interest seeking quarantine bison the ITBC submitted requests on behalf of the Northern Arapaho Tribe in Wyoming and the Fort Peck Tribes in Montana. The tribal proposals were looking at three successive annual allocations with the Arapaho tribe being selected to receive the first allocation, however the original opportunity did not develop as hoped.

In the original plan the Fort Peck Tribes wanted to wait for the second or third annual allocation so they could build a suitable fence to contain the bison. Range unit 62 (see map on page 11) was selected to be the new home for the Yellowstone Bison. This range unit contains 4,440 acres and the estimated Animal Unit Months (AUM's) at that time were 1,347.18. In order to increase the AUM's the tribes needed to develop more water sources to improve the distribution of grazing. Two (2) additional water sources were then developed (solar-powered water wells) in areas where forage production in the uplands is abundant, freeing-up areas where livestock had over-grazed. The water development has increased the stocking rate for this pasture to 2,313.60 AUM's, with the bison grazing year round this pasture's carrying capacity is now 192 head. The stocking rate estimate is based on the NRCS's guidelines (see attachment A-1). A wildlife friendly fence was built to contain the bison. The wildlife friendly fence is designed to allow antelope to crawl under the bottom wire, this wire is a smooth wire that is 18" from the ground. The 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th wires are barb wire and they are spaced 8" apart this will discourage the bison from sticking their heads between the wires to itch or rub on them. The top wire is a smooth wire and it is 12" from the 5th wire allowing deer and elk to jump over the fence and not get ensnared by the fifth and sixth wires. The total height of the wildlife friendly fence is 62".

In March of 2012 the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks began working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to transfer 63 bison that stemming from the bison quarantine feasibility study conducted by MFWP and USDA APHIS, as described in the Bison quarantine feasibility phase I/II. Before signing the MOU the MFWP Department felt that the wildlife friendly fence that was built for the Yellowstone Bison was not quite sufficient to contain the animals so it was agreed that the tribes would build a temporary holding facility and keep them there until a more secure fence could be built. The tribes then selected range unit 63 (see map on page

11), which is adjacent range unit 62. A temporary holding facility was built on the southwest corner of range unit 63 and on March 19, 2012 sixty three (63) Yellowstone Bison were transferred to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

Range unit 63 consists of 2,322 acres with several watering sources. The estimated AUM's for this unit is 441.59 (see attachment A-2), with year round grazing the carrying capacity is 36 head of bison which is estimated based on the NRCS guidelines. One month after the Yellowstone Bison arrived on the reservation the buffalo ranch began building a high tensile (electric) fence that could contain the bison. The electric fence was built with a four (4) strand smooth wire (class III galvanized). The wires are coated with 2 ½ times the zinc of traditional fence materials. The fence is electrified by an energizer that puts very short pulses of electricity onto the fence line. These pulses have high voltage (9,000 volts), but are of very short duration (less than 3/10,000th of a second). Nonetheless a shock resulting from a bison coming into contact with the electric fence is very uncomfortable and bison quickly learn to respect this fence. The corners, gates and H braces were built using pressure treated wood posts that have an expected life of 20 to 25 years. The bottom wire was built 20 inches above the ground allowing antelope to easily crawl underneath it, the second, third and fourth wires were spaced 10" apart making the fence 50" high. Gates were made of 2 5/8 steel tubing. In July of that year the bison were released onto range unit 63. The bison learn very quickly to respect this electric fence and have never escaped. Three months after their release to range unit 63 a severe wildfire burned 15,000 acres with 90% of range unit 63 consumed. Several of the Yellowstone Bison died in the fire or were so severely burned that the bison ranch was forced to put them down, but the fence held. The tribes immediately notified the Governor's Office about what occurred and informed them that the Tribes had no alternative but to place the bison in range unit 62 due to the lack of forage resulting from the fire. The MFWP told the buffalo ranch to do what it needed to do. After the fire the Tribes Fish & Game Department rounded up the surviving bison and moved them to range 62. In the summer of 2013 the buffalo ranch replaced all the burned wood posts, purchased a new energizer and got the electricity functioning again in range unit 63, however the bison were left in range unit 62 and are still there today. The wildlife friendly fence that was built for range unit 62 proved to be adequate to hold the bison. Over the past 20 months they have never broken through any fences, escaped or destroyed any private property. The buffalo ranch prepares quarterly reports which includes a requirement to report on all escapes, births, deaths and handling/testing of the Quarantine Feasibility Study (QFS) bison and MFWP receives copies of these reports.

In September of 2013 the tribes rounded up the bison for the annual brucellosis testing of the QFS bison and their offspring as per the MOU agreement. At this time the Fort Peck Tribes also transferred 33 bison to the Gros Ventre & Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Reservation also in accordance with the MOU agreement. The roundup did not proceed as hoped because the capture facility's location was challenging due to the summer rains filling up an associated creek bed and the department had a difficult time getting bison to cross the creek to reach the capture facility. The weather at this time was in the

90's and it became very stressful on the animals so the ranch stopped the roundup & tested the ones that were captured. The ranch decided to relocate the capture facilities to a new site and finish testing the bison that did not get tested earlier, however the federal government shut down occurred and funds could not be issued to complete the task. The buffalo ranch is now in the process of moving the corrals to range unit 62 where the 37 QFS bison can be rounded up more easily and plans on testing them again in early June of 2014. The past year has been an important learning experience and time of growth for the buffalo ranch and its staff.

The Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes remain committed to developing a cultural herd of bison from the Yellowstone National Park. These genetically pure animals would be ideal as they are among those most directly related to our ancestors. In January of 2014 the tribes added range unit 67 (see map on page 11) to the area available for the cultural herd. This range unit is adjacent to the other two range units that are designated for the QFS bison. Range unit 67 has 4,016 acres (see attachment A-3) and the entire pasture has received 2 years rest from grazing resulting in an estimated 815.24 AUM's. The carrying capacity with year round grazing would be 67 bison. The Fort Peck Fish and Game Department has ordered fencing materials and is now in the process of hiring laborers to build a wildlife friendly fence for this unit. The fencing project should be completed by early July of 2014.

The total acreage for the three range units that have been designated for the cultural herd will be 10,778 acres and the AUM's will be 3,569 (see attachments A-1, A-2 & A-3) The carrying capacity with year-round grazing for all three range units is 297 head of bison. The tribes plan to purchase more lands adjacent to the range units currently designated for the business & cultural herd's and will add those lands to the bison program. A Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been issued for all of the bison range units and it has been determined that the Bureau of Indian Affairs issuance of farm/pasture leases and range permits is not a federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as would require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (see attachment B).

In 2012 & 2013 the Wildlife Conservation Society and the World Wildlife Fund sponsored a study on grassland habitat management using buffalo on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation (see attachment C). Kevin Ellison with the World Wildlife Fund has requested to the opportunity to return again this year. The study involved the tribes two cultural herds, on range units 62 & 63. The study also included range unit 57 and the tribes business herd. The study demonstrates the important role that bison play when considering habitat for grassland wildlife. The tribes cultural bison herd is considered wildlife and will be managed as a conservation herd. The goals the tribes wish to achieve with these bison is to maintain their wild characteristics, genetic diversity, and genetic integrity. The three range units where the bison will live are within the species historic range where herd management is contributing to maintaining or recovering native rangelands, other native

animals and local endangered or rare species (Sprague's Pipit , Upland Sandpiper, Baird Sparrow). To help maintain the wild characteristics of the species the tribes will need to ensure that when the bison reach their carrying capacity and begin culling the herd, they maintain an appropriate mix of age and sex classes. To maintain breeding competition and maximize effective population size the buffalo ranch will need to have 40% male and 60% female sex ratio, which should prevent any risk of genetic drift. The bison's range units will not have any cross fencing, which will allow the species to engage in natural foraging throughout the year. The bison's forage will not be supplemented during the winter months. Supplemental feeding will occur only in cases of severe winters, drought or range fires where there is potential for bison to break out of their range units in search for food. The only time the bison will be handled is when they reach their carrying capacity and culling must occur.

To maintain the genetic integrity of the Yellowstone Bison the tribes' cultural and business herds will never be allowed to intermingle with each other. Range unit's 56, 57 and 58 (see map on page 11) are designated for the tribes business herd. Different colored Ear tags will be used to identify the business herd. In future years the ranch could possibly take a few Yellowstone Bulls and use them for breeding purposes in the business herd. This would help reduce any inbreeding in the business herd and contribute to genetic diversity. The old business herd bulls could then be offered for hunts to the general public.

The Fort Peck Tribes Land Use Policy's Grazing schedule (see attachment D page 27) authorizing year round grazing will be permitted for the tribal bison herds on the occupied range units. To permit long-term management planning for the bison, grazing privileges are granted for ten year periods. The Turtle Mount Buffalo Ranch has developed a 5 year business & management plan for the business & cultural bison herds (see attachment E). The business and management plan addresses topics such as buffalo economics, herd management, herd health, disease testing, liability, herd management goals and objectives, ownership and management responsibilities. The 5 year business & management plan will be updated periodically as new scientific information emerges and experience is gained in managing our business & cultural herds. The Fort Peck Tribes have a "Foreign Animal Disease Emergency Preparedness Plan" (see attachment F) to respond to the outbreak of any foreign disease in any domestic and wildlife species on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and an "Emergency Response Plan" to minimize the spread of any foreign disease on the reservation. The Fort Peck Tribes and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks currently have a Memorandum of Understanding regarding bison from the Quarantine Feasibility Study (see attachment G) which address bison escapes, disease issues, responsibilities for any damage to persons or property caused by the QFS bison. The MOU also states that the tribes will keep liability insurance to cover any claims during the five year monitoring period. A copy of the liability insurance is in attachment H. Should the tribes receive the Yellowstone Bison held at Ted Turner's Green Ranch then another MOU similar to the first one could be developed.

The long term goals for a cultural herd is to provide tribal members with the opportunity to re-establish their spiritual, traditional & cultural connections to bison. The reservations population suffers from high rates of cardio vascular disease and other diet related diseases and there is therefore a desire to establish a healthier alternative to the current Native American Diet. Native Americans are directly impacted by the genetic inability to effectively metabolize modern processed foods. The annual culling of the bison will occur when their carrying capacity of range units in the bison program has been reached. The meat will be distributed to the Diabetic Program, Elderly Program, Reservations School lunch program, Cultural Organizations, homeless shelter, and educational events. In the future when the tribes have established a sustainable population with a consistent surplus, the tribes would like to assist other tribes or organizations that are interested in establishing genetically pure bison herds, or assist tribes by supplying them with new breeding bulls or future offspring. In the coming years several small conservation herds can be established and the organizations that manage those small conservation herds will need to exchange breeding bulls with others to prevent or minimize inbreeding in their herds.

Yellowstone National Park and the adjacent States have been getting a lot of bad press through the years about the needless slaughter of bison when they migrate out of the park in search of food during the winter. Part of the solution to this problem could be to round up the bison that migrate out and test them for brucellosis. The ones that test negative could be placed in a temporary holding facility for 90 days and then be retested. Should the bison test negative again then they could be sent to another facility for further monitoring as per QFS guidelines. The ones that test positive would be sent to slaughter facilities and the meat, hide and heads could then be distributed to various organizations in response to any requests.

The Tribes have been in discussions with Yellowstone National Park Personnel & the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council concerning the possibility of establishing a Quarantine Facility on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The proposed quarantine/surveillance pasture will be located in range unit 62 (see map on page 11). The quarantine/surveillance pasture would be on 320 acres of fee land that the tribes recently purchased. Two separate monitoring pens would be built within the 320 acre pasture. Water wells & stock tanks will be developed in each monitoring pen. A capture facility (corrals) is currently being built on the north end of the proposed quarantine/surveillance facility (see map on page 11). As mentioned earlier in the proposal, the Tribes are willing to monitor any bison that come from the Yellowstone area that have tested negative for brucellosis. Once the bison arrive on the reservation they will be kept in the surveillance pasture until all required tests for brucellosis necessary to designate them disease-free permitting their release are completed. 70% of the bison designated disease-free through this process could go to other tribes, various organization and/or State and Federal Parks that want Yellowstone Bison. 30% will remain with the Fort Peck Tribes for their cultural herd. Agreements would be made with these groups to ensure that these bison are not mixed with bison that are not

genetically pure. The Turtle Mound Buffalo Ranch will need to feed the bison while in quarantine and has 120 acres of hay land available and is locating more hay land to increase hay stockpiles. The hay land is approximately 1 mile from the surveillance pasture so the cost of production will be minimized. Agreements between the Tribes, State of Montana, USDA APHIS and Yellowstone National Park will need to be completed concerning all the protocols for transfers, requirements, roles, quarantine facility guidelines, brucellosis testing, disposition of bison and the responsibilities of each organization.

The Fort Peck Tribes are one of the founding members of the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) and have been an active member since its inception in 1990. The ITBC's goal is to assist tribes in reestablishing buffalo herds on tribal lands. The ITBC has assisted the Fort Peck Tribes by providing Herd Development Grants, which has allowed us to purchase capture facilities, fencing for range units, water developments, haying equipment, acquire surplus bison from Federal Parks for the tribes business herd. They are now helping to explore the potential to establish a quarantine facility on the reservation.

The 37 QFS Bison the Tribes received in 2012 still require 3 more years of monitoring and brucellosis testing. Should the Fort Peck Tribes receive the bison from Ted Turner's Green Ranch then the Tribes will need to place the 37 bison in range unit 67 and place the new allocation of bison from Turner's Ranch in range units 62 and 63 until the other bison successfully emerge from quarantine.

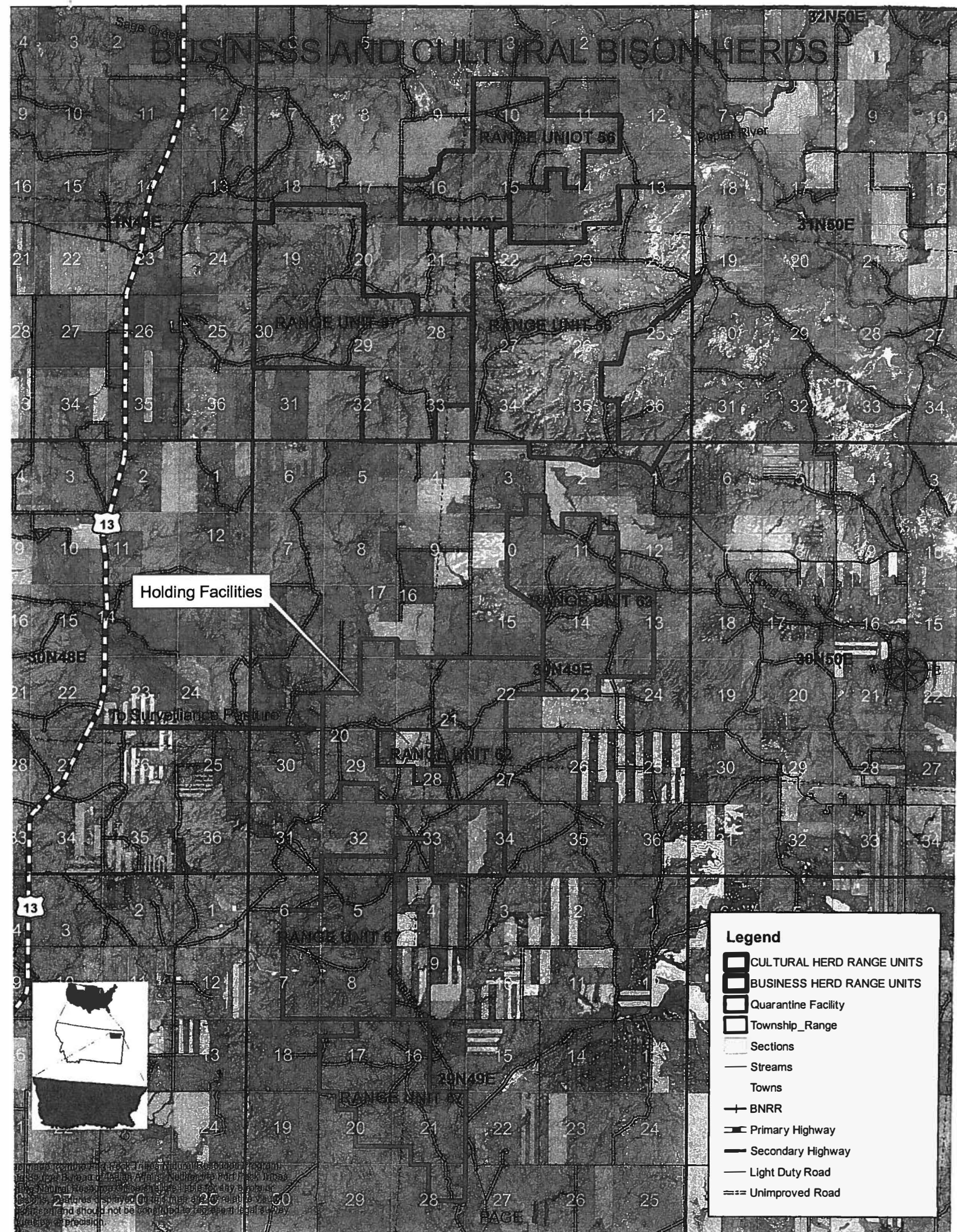
When deciding how to distribute the bison on Turner's Ranch, The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks should recognize that special attention should be paid to maintaining a family group structure that resembles that of natural populations wherein matrilineal groups are the norm. The QFS bison at Turner's have probably already established their family groups and breaking up these family groups again will just be another setback in attempts to maintain the bison's wild character, by preserving mixed age classes within the herd. The Fort Peck Tribes have observed uncharacteristic behaviors among the first QFS Bison they received in 2012 and were again required to break up the family structure in 2013 when 33 bison were removed and sent to the Fort Belknap Tribes. The bison have a tendency to follow the biggest bull in the herd, despite the fact that they would typically follow one of the lead females. In time, the Turner Bison could permit the Fort Peck Tribes Bison to adopt a matrilineal herd structure.

The Fort Peck Tribes Business and Cultural Buffalo Herds are managed and overseen by the Tribal Fish and Game Department in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources. The Buffalo Ranch has a Buffalo Manager that oversees the day to day operations of the buffalo and reports any incidents to the Director. The Tribal Chairman has general supervision of all Directors and Employees. The Tribal Executive Board is the Governing Body of the Fort Peck Tribes.

The Fort Peck Tribal Court has criminal jurisdiction over all offences committed by an Indian within the boundaries of the Fort Peck Reservation in accordance with the laws of the tribes as established by duly enacted ordinances of the Tribal Executive Board. The Fort Peck Tribal Court has civil jurisdiction over any action where one party to the action shall be an Indian, or a corporation or entity owned in whole or in substantial part by the Indian or the Tribes or a corporation or entity chartered by the Tribes; and the cause of action arises under the Constitution or laws of the Tribes; or An Indian party to the action resides on the Fort Peck Reservation. The Tribal Executive Board has passed a resolution authorizing the Tribes Buffalo Ranch to submit this proposal to the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to request allocation of the QFS Bison at Ted Turner's Green Ranch to the Fort Peck Tribes.

The Tribes Cultural Herd's range units are located within Range 30 North, Township 49 East and Range 29 North, Township 49 East. The Business Herd is located within Range 31 North, Township 49 East (see map on page 10). To travel to the Cultural Herd's main entrance and the proposed Quarantine/Surveillance pasture a person would go north at the intersection of US Highway 2 & Montana Highway 13, travel for 15 miles and turn right at mile marker 19 and travel 3 more miles east and you will arrive at main gate.

BUSINESS AND CULTURAL BISON HERDS



It made room for a new look in the National Research Council's Science Board on Asian Affairs. Neither the Port Kaituma National Research Council, nor the Little Rock City Park Council, matches the play of the 25th year to the 30th year and should not be considered to represent legal or any other provision.