

Briefing Statement

Bureau:	National Park Service
Issue:	Bison Conservation Transfer Program
Park Site:	Yellowstone National Park
Date:	July 10, 2023

Current Status

- The Bison Conservation Transfer Program (BCTP) is a collaborative effort between the NPS, APHIS, State of Montana, and Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes at Ft. Peck to transfer live bison to other Tribes after a prolonged quarantine for brucellosis.
- Since 2019, nearly 300 bison have been transferred to the Ft. Peck Tribes with approximately 175 of those moved through Ft. Peck to at least 22 other Tribes in 12 states.
- A record 282 bison were entered into the BCTP during winter 2023, because of a record winter migration and recent NPS Yellowstone facility expansion.
- The NPS operates a 200-animal facility within Yellowstone and APHIS leases a 75-animal facility outside the park nearby in Montana, which supports up to eight individual cohorts simultaneously undergoing quarantine.
- The timeframe for completing quarantine is about two years for male cohorts and three years for female cohorts, after which the State of Montana Veterinarian provides brucellosis-clearance allowing their transport to assurance testing facilities outside the state Designated Surveillance Area for brucellosis (DSA).
- The Ft. Peck Tribes operate the only BCTP assurance testing facility that provides for one year of additional testing before the animals can be integrated into other herds.
- The InterTribal Buffalo Council works with the Ft. Peck Tribes to transfer bison that have complete
- assurance testing to Tribes around the country.
- Secretarial Order 3410 (SO 3410) directs the NPS to collaborate with Tribes and other conservation partners to increase quarantine capacity to facilitate additional bison transfers to Tribes.

Shortening Timelines

- APHIS is currently revising rules for quarantine protocols through the Code of Federal Regulations, Program Standards, and interim guidance documents.
- These changes could shorten the timeframe to completion for males to 300 days, reduce age restrictions on brucellosis clearance, and reduce the number of tests required during assurance testing.
- Shortened timelines could allow entering 100-150 animals into the program annually versus entering 100-200 animals every 2-3 years.
- Implementing these rule changes could double the current BCTP capacity and allow for enrollment of up to 140 new animals into the program in 2024. Without revising the rules, no new animals could enter the BCTP for several years.

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