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Montana Bison

"Promoting The Bison Industry"

September 2017

Association

2017 IBC Enjoyed The Big Skies of Montana

By Karen Conley

With the towering Rocky Mountains as a backdrop, the 2017 International Bison Conference (IBC) descended upon Big Sky, Montana this past July. The theme of Big Skies, Bright Horizons fit like a glove, as the beauty of western Montana surrounded the more than 600 participants and lured them to explore well beyond the hotel setting.

The event, which featured the largest gathering of bison enthusiasts since the 2000 IBC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, featured no shortage of speakers, topics and entertainment. As with past IBC events, friendships were rekindled and new ones formed as people from across the globe attended the conference. With the Big Sky area featuring the July 4 Independence Day festivities, the week literally kicked off with a bang.

The first day featured a Kick-Off at the nearby 320 Ranch. With speakers, a chuck wagon luncheon, a drone demonstration and several speakers, there was plenty of activity to keep everyone occupied. Horseback riding, fishing and hiking were also on the menu. The day-long ranch visit culminated with a concert by the Michael Martin Murphey Trio, a real treat to end the day. But things weren't over quite yet. Upon returning to the Big Sky Village, a firework display with a majestic mountain backdrop put the final touches on the first day of activities.

The second day of the conference featured Bison in a Changing Climate as the theme. Sessions on climate change, climate's role in bison history, a forecast for the bison industry and plenty of experts discussing bison health were all on the day's menu. The halls in the conference venue were tight and packed to the rafters with vendors and conference attendees. The luncheon that day featured an announcement on the new goal for bison restoration, The Bison 1 Million initiative along with the partner project, Bison Hump Day. Both announcements were met with much enthusiasm from the crowd and talk of both peppered the conference discussions for the remainder of the week.

With an afternoon slate of committee meetings, those not obligated found plenty of time to enjoy all the amenities of the area. A tram to the top of the mountain proved very popular, along with plenty of white water rafting expeditions. A little horseback trail riding and hiking thrown in for good measure and topped with picture perfect weather all added up to an enjoyable day.



With nearly every seat occupied, the opening session of the 2017 International Bison Conference filled the venue at Big Sky Resort this past July.

At right, the wide open spaces of Ted Turner's Flying D Ranch played right into the conference theme of Big Skies, Bright Horizons.



Later in the afternoon, "Beyond the Grind: A culinary conversation" was the featured session and it was a huge hit. With famed butcher Adam Dantforth and chef Kyle Mendenhall at the helm, the pair explored new cuts and how to prepare them. The outdoor pavilion was packed with attendees for the session and the efforts of the culinary duo were enjoyed by everyone at the conclusion of the demonstration. The Foundation Reception and networking dinner followed the demonstration, with the evening culminating with a concert featuring Wyle and the Wild West.

With the finish line starting to come into view, the third day of the conference focused on marketing all things bison. Building the brand of bison, bison goes global

Continued on page 6



President's Corner By Aaron Paulson



Summer is quickly winding up here. The mornings are chilly and we are looking toward a coming frost. We are still in thick smoke, but thankful to not have the fires close to home. We are thinking of those who have been dealing with the drought and fires in their area.

Hopefully you were able to attend the International Bison Conference in Big Sky this past July. What a wonderful conference and the location could not be beat! Conference attendees had a wide array of speakers that aimed to spread good news and help educate others about the bison business.

This is a great time in history for all of us to be raising bison. Whether you are a producer, consumer, or conservationist we appreciate your support. At heart, everyone most likely falls under all three categories. As the demand continues to outstrip supply, it is important for us all to think well into the future. This means to continue making sound business decisions that built the foundation for our current market. If we can grow slowly and continue to be a niche product by promoting a superior and consistent red meat and by product, we can only hope for blue skies ahead.

It is so important when we are contacted by potential producers that we share as much information as possible. Both the good and the bad stories about the business. Oftentimes, the bad stories

are those that help others learn most. Please take the time to answer the call and assist others that are considering taking the leap into the bison business. Invite them to a future MBA and NBA meeting and encourage networking. It seems most every producer will welcome others with open arms to see their herd, facility, or spend time visiting about bison. This makes it an appealing endeavor. The same thing goes for meeting skeptics. Be sure to take time to educate them and share our great story. We have spent countless hours trying to educate conservation districts and other cynics of bison. If you are unable to get through to the skeptic, ask your MBA board to assist. Perhaps we could meet and/or invite them attend one of our meetings, or assist in any capacity that might help them to better understand the bison ranching business. The more often we can positively portray bison ranching, the better we can assist in preventing county ordinances, resolutions, legislation and negative easements. It takes all of us to prevent these movements.

I look forward to seeing you at the Winter MBA Conference January 6-7, 2018.

Calendar of Upcoming Buffalo Auctions, Conferences and Events

November 11: Quarter Circle Y Buffalo Company, Mahto, SD. Contact Monty Hepper at 605-823-2357 or 605-848-0800.

November 18: 52nd Annual Custer State Park Fall Classic Bison Auction. Custer State Park Visitor Center. Contact Chad Kremer at 605-225-4515 for details and information.

November 18: 3rd Annual 777 Bison Ranch Production & Breeding Bull Auction. Hotel Alex Johnson Ballroom, Rapid City, SD. Contact Moritz Espy at (605) 430-7471.

November 24 - 25: Minnesota Buffalo Assn. Annual Legends of the Fall Bison Auction and Bison Fundamentals Education Class. Central Livestock Sale Barn, Albany, MN. (507) 454-2828 or www.mnbison.org.

November 26: Prairie Sky Ranch Annual Production Auction. At the ranch, 11983 Dry Lake Road, Sisseton, SD. Contact Bruce Prins at (701) 866-8485 or www.bradeenauction.com for updates and information.

November 27: Brownotter Buffalo Ranch Annual Production Auction. Grand River Casino, Mobridge, SD. Contact Ron Brownotter at (605) 848-2623 or www.bradeenauction.com for updates and information.

November 30 - December 2: Western Bison Assn. Wild West

Buffalo Stampede meeting and show and sale. Golden Spike Events Center, Ogden, UT. Contact Susan Maass at (605) 515-0318 for details or visit www.westernbison.org.

December 2: Kansas Buffalo Assn. 28th Annual Fall Buffalo Auction. Farmers and Ranchers Livestock Commission Company, Salina, KS. Contact Dick Gehring at (620) 345-6526 or visit www.kansasbuffalo.org.

January 17 - 19, 2018: National Bison Assn. Winter Conference, Denver, CO. (303) 292-2833 or www.bisoncentral.com.

January 20: National Bison Assn. Gold Trophy Show and Sale. National Western Livestock Auction Center, Denver, CO. (303) 292-2833 or www.bisoncentral.com.

February 2 - 3: Dakota Territory Buffalo Assn. Winter Conference. Best Western Ramkota Hotel, Rapid City, SD. (605) 519-1326 or www.dakotabuffalo.com.

February 4: Dakota Territory Buffalo Assn. Black Hills Buffalo Classic Show and Sale, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD. (605) 519-1326 or www.dakotabuffalo.com.

April 20 - 22: Minnesota Buffalo Assn. Annual Spring Conference. Watertown, SD. www.mnbison.org.

Montana Bison Association Members can place their business card ads in the MBA newsletters at no charge. For non-members, the cost is only \$25 per year to be in all the Montana Bison Association newsletters.

**• For information or to submit your card, contact •
Julia Arnold at 5 N. Virginia St., Conrad, MT 59425
(406)899-1611 or e-mail: jarnoldmt@gmail.com**

**SAVE THE DATE!
MONTANA BISON ASSN.
WINTER MEETING
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MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!**



Animal Disease Traceability Meeting Summary

By Aaron Paulson

On May 24 the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) hosted a meeting in Billings, Montana regarding industry perspective of Animal Disease Traceability. This was a public feedback meeting attended by livestock producers, veterinarians, state and federal officials and other interested parties.

Dr. Thomas Linfield requested a Montana Bison Association (MBA) board member be present to sit on their panel for bison producers input. Aaron Paulson attended on behalf of the MBA. They requested feedback on how the bison producers feel the current regulations regarding identification are working. Our response was that current regulations are working well to ensure that we are able to successfully maintain interstate bison markets on domestic bison. We have not had any negative feedback from producers regarding the current requirements.

For example, there have been three bison producers in southwest Montana that are current members of the MBA who have had animals test positive for brucellosis in the past few years. In each case, the Montana Department of Livestock and APHIS has been very cooperative. Due to the current identification requirements, all three producers were able to work through quarantine and maintain a viable operation. The identification requirements also guaranteed that suspect and positive animals were identifiable, removed and further testing was possible on certain animals. More importantly, the producers were able to continue to be isolated, economically viable, and

not inhibit other bison or livestock producers exporting their product beyond county and state lines. It was dually noted that the removal of identified animals in lieu of entire herd depopulation is a more reasonable approach.

We respectfully requested that APHIS re-evaluate the requirement for neighboring and adjacent livestock herds to immediately test all animals. This creates hardship on the producers and their livestock. It may be worth evaluating if a whole herd test within twelve months would achieve the objectives and minimize undue stress on both livestock and producers.

For more information or to receive a copy of the USDA Animal Disease Traceability Assessment Report visit: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/adt-assessment.pdf>.

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Holistic Management: Your Key to Successful Bison and Land Management Seminar

By Roland Kroos

I've been offering this seminar for bison producers since 2008. Several bison producers from Montana have attended this four-day bison management seminar. Other students have come from across the US, Canada and Europe to attend.

Chris Bechtold from Choteau said this seminar helped him understand how he can improve profitability and how to evaluate the economic viability of a bison operation. Aaron Paulson reports "Roland spends considerable time in the grazing planning portion of the course, his methodical teaching and the systematic approach of HM lays the foundation for students to immediately apply the principles and benefit your ranch." Amy Bechtold stated "This seminar gave me the needed knowledge so, that my continued participation in the ranch business is valid. I can support my husband in management and decisions he is making to effectively manage the Diamond 4 D Ranch."

I currently teach this on-site seminar at two bison ranches. The Durham Ranch by Wright, Wyoming is the first location and limited to 15 people. John Flocchini (general manager) and Pat Thomson (bison manager) participate daily in a question-answer session. During these Q&A sessions, students learn from the experiences of the ranch staff. This might involve information about the vaccination program to how to best handle bison. I also teach this seminar at North Star Bison Ranch by Rice Lake, Wisconsin and this one is limited to 30 students. Lee Graese, along with his daughter,

Marielle Hewitt, from North Star Bison share their experiences in raising bison and how they actively manage bison to promote very healthy, productive pastures. At the North Star Bison seminar, students get to see how the bison are processed at the North Star processing plant and store.

Both ranches are using the Holistic Management process to make management decisions. The Durham Ranch manages approximately 2,000 head of bison in one large herd. To

effectively manage for highly productive pastures, the large bison herd is moved thru 80 pastures. At North Star Bison, they manage their bison through 20 plus pastures and do a lot of strip grazing to get the essential impact to the land. Both ranches will tell you how holistic management has improved the triple bottom line; economic, social, and ecological benefits.

These seminars are commonly taught in February and March each year. For the last five years, the seminars have sold out. Once the dates are announced, don't wait to

register. I am planning to offer a Holistic Management seminar in Shelby, MT this fall. For more information about the seminars and dates, check out our website: <https://www.crossroadsranchconsulting.com/educational-services>. Like my Crossroads Ranch Consulting Facebook page to get constant updates about upcoming seminars and events.



Pat Thomson presenting the Drought Management Plan that Durham Ranch uses to help guide management decisions during times of drought.

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MBA Has Successful Winter Conference

The Montana Bison Association (MBA) held its annual Winter Conference in Great Falls, Montana in early January. The cold weather did not stop the state's top bison experts, fellow ranchers or any new bison enthusiasts, from showing up and learning all the successes of the bison industry. The conference was well attended and enjoyed by everyone.

The well-planned event began on Friday with the theme of "Best Management Practices" and a very informative class presented by the National Bison Association's Jim Matheson. The "Bison Advantage" workshop involved the latest news regarding market prices, and industry growth. Jim was able to present the workshop to some new faces, including Winifred rancher and state legislator, Jim Butcher, and Fort Belknap's Tribal Chief Mark Azure and Buffalo Manager Bronco Speakthunder.

The Bison Advantage on Friday not only covered the national and international impact, but included a panel with bison ranchers who answered questions on bison management. The panel consisted of bison ranchers Tobin Arnold, Andrew Bardwell and Brandon Siemion, all based out of Montana, and Marielle Hewitt, who ranches with her family in Wisconsin. The panel had a huge educational impact, with many tips and ideas being shared with the audience. The evening also saw plenty of time for renewing old friendships and making new ones, along with two speakers from the CM Russell Museum, which entertained the young and old alike with pictures, paintings and stories of Charlie Russell and his contact with buffalo of the old west.



On Saturday, the conference began with greetings from MBA President, Aaron Paulson, NBA updates from Jim Matheson, and a progress report on the International Bison Conference slated for early July in Big Sky, Montana. With a room full of eager students, sessions were presented by Marielle Hewitt, North Star Bison, on Best Management Practices; Aaron Paulson, Snowcrest Ranch, Low Stress Handling; Tobin Arnold, Outlaw Livestock, Bison Fencing and Dr. Dave Hunter, DVM, Turner Enterprises, Veterinary Aspects of Bison.

The Saturday meeting also brought many facets of bison education to cattle ranchers and conservation district personnel and political activists.



Due to many anti-wild bison efforts in eastern Montana, the MBA has continued to coordinate with and educate the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MCD). Elena Evans of the MCD, along with about a dozen other invited County Conservation District officers, gave a presentation outlining the steps and legislation per county to limit wild bison.

Much more was on tap for the MBA membership, with reports of financial success and the re-election of Tim Gardipee and Roland Kroos to the board for additional three year terms. With nearly 50 people in attendance, a bison steak supper was enjoyed and then all attention was turned toward the fun auction, with MBA member Jennifer Olson acting as the auctioneer. Lots of useful items were sold, making for a nice fundraiser for the MBA.

As attendees headed home on Sunday, the MBA Board continued working, with a big meeting, a compilation of the financial efforts and re-election of Aaron Paulson and Roland Kroos as the leadership team. This Winter Conference was very educational and productive, with excellent press coverage in the Great Falls Tribune, and TV air-time on KFBB. This was a fantastic and productive winter event. We can't wait to see what's in store for the next conference!



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Montana Hosts 2017 International Bison Conference

Continued from page 1

and bison in the global perspective were just a few of the topics presented and discussed in the morning sessions. The afternoon left plenty of free time as well as featuring a film festival with 6 different bison related films being shown. A few ingenious movie goers found some popcorn and the smell wafted throughout the hallway as they happily munched and watched the big screen.

The evening meal was punctuated with an air of anticipation as this was the night for the big fund raising auction. On tap were just a handful of items, with the one garnering the most attention being the breeding bull with Yellowstone National Park genetics. There was a definite buzz in the air and plenty of speculation about what that bull would bring at the auction.

Following supper, the auction began with a slew of private label wine that featured the IBC logo. Then on to the other items, including a Sharps Shiloh rifle, a bison leather chair and a getaway to Flathead Lake Lodge. Then it was time for the bull! As bidding got underway, complete with a live feed on Facebook, bidding was spirited and the figures quickly reached into the tens of thousands. As it progressed, two bidders duked it out for bragging rights, with the final bid going to Sandy and Jacki Limpert, Slim Buttes Buffalo Ranch, Buffalo, SD, for \$42,500. Now that's a fundraiser and nothing like ending the evening on a very positive note!

For nearly 10 months, IBC organizers had been selling raffle tickets for a Shiloh Sharps Rifle, another Yellowstone genetics bull and a getaway to Ted Turner's Sierra Grande Lodge. With the auction done and one final chance to get in on the Yellowstone genetics bull, tickets sales were brisk toward the end of the conference and the buzz turned to who would win the drawings that would be held the following day.

The final day was one everyone was anticipating. Loading up busses and private vehicles, the conference moved north to the Gallatin Gateway area and Ted Turner's flagship operation, the Flying D Ranch. Nestled into the Spanish Peaks range of the Rocky Mountains, the ranch features over 113,000 acres and is

home to over 4,000 head of bison. As attendees drove across the ranch to the cow camp for a few final speakers and lunch, the bison did not disappoint, with a large group of them stretching as far as the eye could see in belly deep grass, the bulls in the full roar of the rut, seeking out female companionship. Calves scampered around and followed their mothers across the meadow and out of sight around the base of the mountains. It was breathtaking and to see so many animals doing just what Mother Nature intended for them to do...eat, grow and make calves!

At the cow camp, another large group of bison stayed in the meadow just out from the tents and hubbub of the conference, making the perfect backdrop for many photographers. Many sought out the ranch's patriarch, Ted Turner, as he patiently greeted visitors and posed for pictures. With raffle tickets and IBC t-shirts being sold at the back of the massive tent, speakers took to the front to discuss a variety of topics and answer lots of questions. This day was all about opportunity and the bright future that lies ahead for the industry.

Throughout the week there was a strong media presence and the final day at the ranch offered more of the same. Using the ranch for a backdrop, photos were taken, interviews done and articles and video clips were waiting to be filed and published. Everything from culinary magazines to local news stations were on hand throughout the conference and the media blitz continued long after attendees went home, with the ripple effect being felt for many months to come.

Following the speakers and the closing luncheon, it was finally time for the raffle drawing. With people purchasing tickets right up to the drawing time, there was an air of anticipation throughout the crowd. The Sierra Grande trip was won by JoAnne Dorey from Alberta, Canada; the Shiloh Sharps Rifle was won by Trevor Wolery from Montana and the Yellowstone genetics bull was won by Rod Sather from South Dakota.

Following the drawings, busses and cars loaded up and headed through the rest of the Flying D Ranch, with stops at the handling facilities before heading back to Big Sky or, for some, heading down the highways to more vacation time or home. An optional tour of Yellowstone National Park on Saturday was enjoyed by numerous attendees.

Coupled with the initiatives that were laid out in Big Sky and the bright future of the industry tone that was set, it's a sure bet that the 2022 IBC in Saskatchewan, Canada will be well attended by friends old and new!

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Read more about the Bison Hump Day and Bison 1 Million campaigns on page 7 of this issue. Both were announced at the recent International Bison Conference in Big Sky, Montana.

Lower right: A small herd of buffalo greeted the IBC visitors at the Flying D Ranch.





National Bison Association Announces Campaigns During International Bison Conference

By Karen Conley

A coalition made up of the National Bison Association, the Canadian Bison Association, the Intertribal Buffalo Council and the Wildlife Conservation Society have banded together to launch an aggressive goal of one million bison by the year 2027. Billed as a bison recovery effort, Bison 1 Million was formally announced during the International Bison Conference in Big Sky, Montana this past July.

More than doubling the current population will require having everyone on board, working toward the common goal. The groups will be planning outreach education and activities that will all be geared toward this goal of one million bison across the continent.

It is an ambitious project, but one that the bison community readily embraces. With consumer demand at an all-time high and a critical need for more bison and bison producers, the collective power of the bison community will be pressed into action for the next decade or more. National Bison Association Executive Director, Dave Carter, said he would be thrilled if the goal could be reached by the 2027 International Bison Conference (IBC), which would be held in the United States at that time.

Along with the Bison 1 Million campaign, another launch was

announced at the same time. Promoting Wednesdays as "Bison Hump Day", the groups hope to make the effort as mainstream as Meatless Monday and Taco Tuesday.

Organizers hope to promote the healthy and delicious meat which will in turn help achieve the goal of one million bison by 2027. "Eat more to restore more" has become the rallying cry for the Hump Day promotion.

As the Hump Day promotion was announced, those in attendance at the 2017 IBC were treated to promotional sunglasses with the Hump Day logo displayed prominently on the lenses. Rounds of laughter greeted the sunglasses, which were in high demand for the rest of the conference. Producers have embraced the idea, with plenty of photos of the sunglasses being found on various social media sites and the movement grows weekly.

These campaign announcements were both carried on Facebook Live on July 5, 2017. You can watch the entire presentation by going to the National Bison Association's Facebook page. Remember to like and share the page and share your own Hump Day photos!

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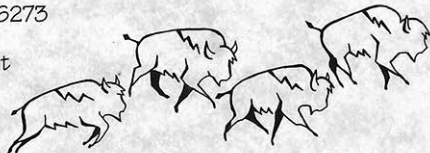
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