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MONTANA BISON

"Promoting The Bison Industry"

November 2016

ASSOCIATION

Winter Conference and Workshop Slated for January 6 & 7

This year the Winter Conference will be composed of two separate but entirely related days. Both activities will be held in Great Falls, Montana on January 6 and 7, 2017 at the Great Falls Holiday Inn. Friday morning activities will focus on the 'Bison Advantage' and be presented by the National Bison Association in the morning. Later that same day, the Bison Advantage Workshop will include presentations by a panel focused on sharing information on grazing management, herd health programs, winter feeding, employees, etc. The cost for the Friday event is \$30 and will include lunch.

The Winter Conference will begin Friday evening with a meet and greet and a presentation to kick off our event. The theme for this year's winter conference is Best Management Practices for Raising Bison Commercially. The Best Management Practices show that when properly managed, bison can have a beneficial impact on the land, can be humanely raised, can be socially beneficial for the community, and can support a growing population with a very healthy food source and other useful by-products. These best management practices will focus on:

- Bison will be grazed using an ecologically sound grazing program.
- Bison will be humanely treated using low stress handling techniques.
- To ensure good health, all bison will be recurrently monitored and tested using a well thought out herd health program.
- To ensure good containment and management of bison, each ranch will use a well thought out land plan.

At the end of our conference, we plan to ask our membership to adopt these Best Management Practices for Commercial Bison Producers. Cost for the general conference will be \$95/person. Information will be shared via email as details are further determined. Please contact the Great Falls Holiday Inn to book your room at (406) 727-7200. Rooms are \$89/night.

State Conservation Districts At Odds With Producers

As reported in our last newsletter, the Board has now had to address several challenges from Montana state conservation districts who have either obtained voter approval, or are in the process of seeking it, for county resolutions that contain specific requirements for new and existing buffalo ranches. With a tremendous amount of assistance from the National Bison Association's Dave Carter, Jim Matheson and Roy Liedtke, we have attempted to address their concerns and educate the public about commercial bison ranches. In addition, we asked that commercial bison ranches be separated from any language that mentions free roaming bison.

To date, our requests have been ignored. We feel the ordinances being implemented are prejudicial against responsible private bison ranchers.

Both the MBA and the NBA are reviewing our legal rights and alternatives to assure that bison producers continue to operate their ranches and businesses without onerous oversight. We will plan to provide an update on this very important issue at the winter meeting.

Meeting With APR Finds Little Common Ground With MBA

On June 22, 2016, four members of the Montana Bison Association toured the American Prairie Reserve (APR). We discussed and reviewed the management strategies being used by APR. The Montana Bison Association believes in creating healthy bison, producing high quality meat and by-products and managing bison in a sustainable manner to create a healthy landscape. APR's current management approach does not meet the short or long term goals of our association.

Aside from actual ownership of bison, our approaches, techniques, methods, and goals for herd and land management differ greatly. People from APR are not members of Montana Bison Association and expressed very little interest in sharing information or learning how our membership effectively manages bison.



President's Corner By Aaron Paulson



It is hard to believe we are already into the winter months. The summer months were dry here in the southwest part of the state. But fall has been wonderful with an abundance of moisture and delayed frost. We have worked our bison and everyone is sorted and out on fall/ winter pasture. The bison came in healthy and we hope the same for you herds!

Your board of directors and fellow membership has been very busy over the past several months. There have been countless hours of meetings, travel, phone calls and emails. The to-do list has been long and continues to grow. We have been working on a multitude of events and issues that have required MBA involvement, ranging from County Extension Agent meetings, Conservation District meetings, Department of Livestock, American Prairie Reserve, a Social Media Seminar to radio interviews. Also, we are in the process of rebuilding the MBA website and are pleased to announce that Jim Matheson is the new social media and website manager. This list, among others, has kept everyone moving.

If you have interest in assisting with any of these issues that involve the MBA, we are always looking for assistance. With the upcoming legislative session we will certainly be needing some aid from the membership in tracking proposed legislation and responding if necessary. It is important that we ask everyone to make contact with the representatives and senators from your districts to start building a relationship. With all the issues surrounding "domestic" vs. "wild free-roaming" bison issues we will need an extensive network to protect the members within our organization. It is critical that we spend the time now to build those relationships so when we are leaning on legislatures we have credibility and a full force of people throughout the state to have a positive ripple effect.

Along this same line of thought, if you could please make contact with your local conservation district (CD) supervisors, even an informal discussion with the supervisors and an invitation to allow them to see your operation, this would be beneficial. There has been a rash of conservation districts that are proposing ordinances that are extremely restrictive. Familiarizing the conservation districts with your ability to manage bison and land health is a key component in prevention of an ordinance in your county.

Lastly, with these record high bison prices it is a great time to spread the word. Our friends in the beef business may be looking for some diversity as their market is struggling, and the meat marketers reports seems to be begging for product. So, invite a neighbor to come talk bison and maybe you'll have a future producer in your area! Better yet, invite your neighbor to the winter MBA Bison Advantage workshop and annual meeting. All the details are in this newsletter, so share it with your neighbors and friends and spread the word about bison!

Please consider receiving the MBA newsletter electronically; not only will it reach you days earlier, it will save the MBA money. Please let Julia know at jarnoldmt@gmail.com if you would like to receive your copy by email only. If you prefer to continue receiving the newsletter by snail mail, no response is needed.

DON'T FORGET YOUR FUN AUCTION ITEMS!

We will be holding our Fun Auction on Saturday evening of our Winter Conference. Please bring an item or two to sell and be ready to buy! This is always a fun time and a great way to support your association!

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 •

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International Bison Conference Set for July 4-8, 2017 In Big Sky, Montana

From the National Bison Association/IBC 2017

The once-every-5-year International Bison Conference (IBC) is a celebration of the American bison and typically draws nearly 500 attendees from around the world! Most attendees hail from North America, but all are welcome. The 2017 IBC will be an exceptional event in part due to its location, just one hour outside of Yellowstone National Park and just 30 minutes from Ted Turner's famed Flying D bison ranch, both of which we'll tour as part of the conference. Please mark your calendars for this special event that is not to be missed!

The IBC planning committee has announced three very special fund raising raffle prizes available in honor of this once-every-five-years event. Drawings will be on July 7 at the IBC, though you don't need to be present to win.

Yellowstone Bull Raffle

Tickets are \$25 US/\$30 Canadian

A very special opportunity awaits with this Yellowstone yearling bull, donated by Turner Enterprises, Inc. This is a second generation bull directly descended from the from the Yellowstone National Park bison herd.



Shiloh 1874 Sporter No. 3 Rifle Raffle

Tickets are \$20 US/\$25 Canadian

We're also raffling off one commemorative 1874 Sporter No. 3 buffalo rifle from Montana-based Shiloh Rifle Co., of which only 15 will be made. We also have 13 of these rifles for direct-purchase for \$5,000/each. The Shiloh Sharps Gun Co. crafted 15 unique reproduction 1874 Sporter No. 3 rifles



specifically for the 2017 IBC. Each 45/70 caliber black powder cartridge rifle has a 30" full heavy octagon barrel, with semi-fancy wood, a traditional steel butt-plate, pewter trip, and full Buckhorn and Blade front. Each rifle is engraved with a full buffalo on the hammer side, and is individually numbered with IBC001 through IBC015.

Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa Stay Raffle

Tickets are \$20 US/\$25 Canadian

Indulge in a 4-night stay for four people at Ted Turner's historic Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa in Truth or Consequences, NM (www.sierragrandelodge.com), along with credit toward The Restaurant at Sierra Grande, The Spa at Sierra Grande, and an adventure tour on one of Ted Turner's ranches. The Sierra Grande is known for its unparalleled combination of luxurious accommodations, rustic charm, amazing food and relaxing spa and mineral baths. As part of this package, you will have a half-day adventure tour for 4 people on either the Armendaris or Ladder Ranches.



More details can be found at www.IBC2017.com. If you are interested in purchasing raffle tickets, contact the NBA office at (303) 292-2833, any NBA board member or any IBC committee member.

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4 November 2016 MONTANA BISON ASSOCIATION



Agenda for Bison Advantage Workshop on January 6, 2017 Holiday Inn, Great Falls, MT

10:00 - 12:30 - Bison Advantage Workshop presented by Dave Carter or Jim Matheson

12:30 - 1:30 - Lunch, Bison burgers with fries

1:30 - 4:00 - Bison Producers Panel

How ranchers are raising bison in Montana, featuring Steve Mitchell, Tobin & Julia Arnold (small bison producer), Andrew & Annie Bardwell (large bison producer) and Marielle Hewitt.

Purpose of this panel: Each panelist would be given 20 minutes to describe their bison operation. How do you manage your bison operation: acres, grazing management, herd health program, marketing, winter feeding, number of employees, etc...

What have you found works really well in managing bison?

What have you found doesn't work when you are trying to manage bison?

What sage advice would you give a person who is contemplating getting into the bison business?

The cost to attend this workshop is \$30 for adults and \$15 for children, which will cover lunch, drinks and snacks for participants.

To grow our industry, we need to entice new bison producers. Do you know anybody who is interested in raising bison commercially here in Montana? County Extension Agents, FFA leaders, Key Community Leaders, others??

Would you be willing to sponsor a County Extension Agent, FFA Leader or a neighbor who expressed interest in raising bison to attend this workshop? If so, please contact Julia Arnold at (406) 899-1611 or tjwilsall@yahoo.com with names and contact information for prospects.

Please register for the workshop by December 28, 2016.

Agenda for the Montana Bison Association Winter Conference January 7, 2017 at Holiday Inn in Great Falls, MT

Preface: Even though bison became North America's National Mammal in May of this year, there continues to be great fear in

Montana that bison might be classified as a wildlife species (undomesticated animal). What many people in Montana may not realize is that a majority of the bison remaining in the United States today live on private commercial ranches. The resurgence of bison today is one of the greatest conservation success stories and bison producers continue to demonstrate that this majestic animal can support a growing population by producing very healthy food and other by-products, as they have done for more than 200 years.

The theme for this year's winter conference is Best Management Practices for Raising Bison Commercially.

Friday, January 6

6:30 - No host Bar opens

7:15 - Supper (Bison Chili with corn bread & salad)

7:30 - Entertainment. Speaker from Charlie Russell Museum

10:30 - Bar closes

Saturday, January 7

8:30 - Welcome, MBA President, Aaron Paulson. Update membership with issues, challenges and accomplishments this past year

9:00 - Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Elena Evans, Executive Director

9:20 - Dave Carter or Jim Matheson, NBA Update and upcoming IBC conference at Big Sky

9:45 - Large or small, grazing bison to create a very healthy soil and plant community, Marielle Hewitt, North Star Bison

11:15 - What Kind of fence does it take to hold bison? Tobin Arnold & Andrew Bardwell

12:00 - Lunch, Shaved Bison Prime Rib Sandwich

1:00 - Monitoring and testing the health of your herd, Dave Hunter

2:30 - Low Stress Handling, Aaron Paulson & Marielle Hewitt

4:00 - MBA Website and Facebook: How do I connect? How can I get my information posted? Live demonstration of these two sites with Jim Matheson or Roland Kroos

4:30 - MBA membership meeting.

6:00 - No host bar opens

6:30 - Banquet, Bison Sirloin Steak w/Mushroom Sauce, mashed garlic potatoes & seasonal vegetables

7:45 - MBA Fun Auction. Please remember to bring your auction items to the conference

10:3 - Bar closes and party ends

Sunday, January 8

Sunday morning - MBA board meeting. Time of board meeting will be announced at our winter conference. All members are welcome to attend. We will need your assistance to complete a number of tasks, including preparation for IBC.

Early Conference Registration of \$95 per person ends on December 28, 2016. Late Registration at the door will be \$120 per person.

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The Splendor of Grass - Marielle Hewitt, Speaker

By Roland Kroos

Marielle Graese Hewitt (27) lives in Rice Lake, WI where her family owns and operates NorthStar Bison. NorthStar Bison is a vertical integrated, 100% Grass-Fed meat company. Early on, Marielle favored working outside in the pastures with her dad, Lee Graese. Today, she and her husband Brett, are the herdsman overseeing the grazing management and health of three to four bison herds. Marielle manages almost 800 head of bison on 1,200 acres.

How do they manage this many bison on such a small acreage? With God's blessing, abundant rainfall and a holistic grazing approach. "We are geeks about our pastures. If they aren't healthy, the animals and wildlife that live on them aren't healthy. Our high-quality bison is a by-product of our hard work to regain rich diverse soil and plant community that is alive with abundant life, above and below the ground," notes Marielle. Hear their story, how they converted wore out cropland and converted it back to a healthy grassland.

Many bison producers out west think you need thousands of acres to effectively manage a grazing program. Hear how NorthStar put 16,000 lbs of bison per acre and how this has benefited the land. This year they plan to build four more miles of fence to further increase their grazing management. Once all the fence is built, they plan to have no pasture larger than seven acres. They have also acquired another 300 acres, so NorthStar continues to expand to meet the ever-increasing demand for their bison products.

I heard Marielle speak at the Minnesota Educational Conference in the spring of 2015. Her knowledge of grass management and how bison graze is truly amazing. I would feel confident in having her teach grazing management in my Holistic Management seminars. Whether your bison operation is large or small, you will learn how you can effectively manage your grazing program by listening to Marielle's presentation.



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MBA Launching New Website and Now On Facebook!

MBA members and bison lovers, the Montana Bison Association has jumped into the 21st century and now has a fantastic Facebook (FB) page. For those of you already on FB, all you to do is type in "Montana Bison Association" in the search area and our page pops up! This is a big shot in the arm for MBA and bison in general, as now we are worldwide, connected to billions of FB users.

The FB page will give you easy digital contact with other FB members and millions of potential customers. Currently it has only several hundred likes, but soon that number will grow to thousands and then hundreds of thousands. The FB page has wonderful bison ranch stories and photos, recipes, handling videos, and retail food trailers from Bitterroot Bison. The potential for this social media presence is



widespread, since it also connects to the NEW website, www.montanabison.org. Jump on FB, and help us help your business grow.

The MBA board started the FB page a few months ago, now it is administered by Jim Matheson (jmatheson@bisoncentral.com) of the NBA and several board members. Jim is also restructuring the MBA website, which needed an overhaul.

For those not on FB, it is very easy to get a page, all you do is type <https://www.facebook.com/pages/> create in your browser search, register your e-mail, type in the data you wish to share with the world, copy and paste a few of your best pictures and boom, your whole digital world opens up! JOIN and spread the love of bison on FB and our new website!

Calendar of Upcoming Buffalo Auctions, Conferences and Events

December 1 - 3: Western Bison Assn. Wild West Buffalo Stampede meeting and show and sale. Golden Spike Events Center, Ogden, UT. Contact John Painter at (575) 770-7751 for details or visit www.westernbison.org.

December 3: Kansas Buffalo Assn. 27th Annual Fall Buffalo Auction. Farmers and Ranchers Livestock Commission Company, Salina, KS. Contact sale chairman, Dick Gehring at (620) 345-6526 or visit www.kansasbuffalo.org.

December 8: Missouri Bison Assn. Fall Sale. Lolli Brothers Sale Barn, Macon, MO. www.mobisonassoc.org.

January 6 & 7, 2017: Montana Bison Assn. Bison Advantage Workshop and Annual Winter Conference, Great Falls, MT. www.montanabison.org or (406) 899-1611.

January 13 - 14: North Dakota Buffalo Assn. Annual Meeting and Buffalo Auction. Napoleon, ND. www.ndbuffalo.com or (701) 340-6282.

January 18 - 20: National Bison Assn. Winter Conference, Denver, CO. (303) 292-2833 or www.bisoncentral.com.

January 21: National Bison Assn. Gold Trophy Show and Sale. National Western Livestock Auction Center, Denver, CO. (303) 292-2833 or www.bisoncentral.com.

February 3 - 4: Dakota Territory Buffalo Assn. Winter Conference. Best Western Ramkota Hotel, Rapid City, SD. (605) 519-1326 or www.dakotabuffalo.com.

February 5: Dakota Territory Buffalo Assn. Black Hills Buffalo Classic Show and Sale, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD. (605) 519-1326 or www.dakotabuffalo.com.

March 31 - April 2: Minnesota Buffalo Assn. Annual Spring Conference. Mahnomon, MN. (507) 454-2828 or www.mnbison.org.

July 4 - 7: 5th International Bison Conference. Big Sky, MT. www.bisoncentral.com.