# [***WILD BISON FROM YELLOWSTONE STAMPEDE INTO FORT PECK***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:558H-NF31-DYTH-G4FW-00000-00&context=1516831)

States News Service

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**Body**

The following information was ***released by Defenders of Wildlife***:

Tribal officials, Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer, and wildlife conservation leaders will be gathering at the Fort Peck Indian Reservation Wednesday morning to welcome home genetically pure, wild bison. On Monday, the bison completed a 500-mile journey from a facility just outside Yellowstone National Park where some of them were held for up to five years to ensure they are disease-free. The historic homecoming caps decades of work by the ***tribes*** of Fort Peck and Fort Belknap Reservations, and is an important step in restoring wild bison to the Great Plains.

The following is a statement from Jamie Rappaport Clark, president of Defenders of Wildlife, who was at Fort Peck on Monday to witness the bison's arrival:

Defenders is thrilled to be able to share this historic moment with the ***tribes*** of Fort Peck and Fort Belknap, the state of Montana, and our partners in the conservation community. The return of genetically pure, wild bison to tribal lands in eastern Montana has been a long time coming, and it's great to see it finally happening.

These bison are some of the few genetically pure descendants of the historic herds that once thundered across the Great Plains by the millions. Restoration of these Yellowstone bison to tribal lands in eastern Montana is a major step forward for bison conservation. It's also part of a much broader effort to restore Yellowstone bison to more places across the entire region and revitalize our prairie ecosystems.

Native Americans have had a special relationship with bison for thousands of years. The ***tribes*** at Fort Peck and Fort Belknap have generously offered to take these wild bison to restore new herds of genetically pure bison, which only adds to the cultural significance of this homecoming. We would like to thank the ***tribes*** for making this dream come true, and we're honored to have been able to play a part in making it happen. We would also like to thank Governor Schweitzer for his leadership in finding more places for Yellowstone bison to roam in Montana.

Background:

Millions of bison thundered across the Great Plains for thousands of years. But by the end of the 1800s, those vast herds had been virtually eliminated due to unregulated shooting. Today, wild bison are making a small comeback in places like Yellowstone National Park, but they need more room to roam. Defenders has been a leading proponent of returning Yellowstone bison to tribal lands, and we've worked closely with tribal wildlife managers for years at the Fort Peck and Fort Belknap Indian Reservations. We've invested more than $84,000 so far for bison restoration at both reservations and will be making additional contributions for fencing and for purchasing adjacent grazing allotments. Though relatively small in area (4,800 acres at Fort Peck and 22,000 acres at Fort Belknap), these new bison reserves have potential for expansion and will also lead by example for tribal and public land managers elsewhere.

We would like to thank The Augustyn Foundation, The Steele-Reese Foundation, Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation, and McIntosh Foundation for their generous support, which helped make the bison relocation possible.

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