# [***YELLOWSTONE BISON ARRIVE AT FORT BELKNAP INDIAN RESERVATION***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5965-R8P1-DYTH-G0D0-00000-00&context=1516831)

States News Service

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**Body**

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

Thirty-six genetically pure, disease-free Yellowstone bison were transported within Montana from the Fort Peck Indian Reservation to Fort Belknap Indian Reservation yesterday. These animals will start a new cultural bison herd on tribal lands - the second herd of bison from Yellowstone National Park to be restored to the Great Plains. Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife has fenced 900 acres as a temporary "surveillance pasture" for the bison, and will eventually move the bison herd into the 22,000 acre tribal bison range to slowly grow the herd for conservation, subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Within a decade and with additional bison range expansions, as many as 1,000 genetically pure bison may once again roam the rolling prairies of north-central Montana.

Until the early 1800s, millions of bison inhabited the Great Plains. These migrating herds shaped the ecology of the region by grazing, aerating and fertilizing the soil and providing food for people and wildlife. But these iconic animals were almost eradicated in the mid-1800s due to widespread slaughter by white settlers during westward expansion. Now, the restoration of bison to tribal lands provides an opportunity to revive some of America's native prairie ecosystems and cultures.

"The return of wild bison to Fort Peck and Fort Belknap is a huge success for the ***tribes*** and for the future of wild bison," said Jonathan Proctor, Rockies and Plains program director for Defenders of Wildlife. "Montana's ***tribes*** are leading the way on bison conservation and providing a new model for restoring wild bison to other parts of the Great Plains. It has been an honor to partner with them over the years, and we look forward to seeing these bison herds flourish at Fort Belknap."

Background:

In March 2012, 61 genetically pure, disease-free bison were transported from Yellowstone National Park to Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana. Half of these animals were supposed to be transferred to Fort Belknap Indian Reservation last summer once fencing was completed. However, a lawsuit was filed to block any further relocation of bison within the state. In June, the Montana Supreme Court lifted the injunction, allowing bison transfers to resume.

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