



InterTribal Buffalo Council
520 Kansas City Ave, Suite 300
Rapid City, SD 57701
Phone: (605) 394-9730
Fax: (605) 394-7742
www.ITBCBuffaloNation.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: ITBC Membership Tribes
FROM: Troy Heinert, Executive Director
DATE: June 1, 2022
RE: Surplus Yellowstone Buffalo FY2021 Request for Proposals – December 2021

After nearly 30 years of working to protect Yellowstone buffalo and work towards their transfer to Tribal lands, *ITBC is pleased to announce that two cohorts of Yellowstone buffalo family groups will be available to ITBC Member Tribes this December 2021.*

This memo serves as official notice that any Member Tribes interested in receiving a Yellowstone buffalo family group via the surplus buffalo program, please submit your request to our office.

Though ITBC cannot guarantee numbers, age, or sex of these animals at this time, we anticipate that each family group will likely consist of 12 adult cows, 3 adult bulls, 6 yearling/coming 2yo bulls, 4 yearling/coming 2yo heifers, and the calves of this year. Each group (of which there are 2) will be available for distribution to ITBC Member Tribes and will be ready for transport by late December 2021 from their current location at Fort Peck's buffalo quarantine facility.

ITBC has an obligation to ensure Member Tribes that receive surplus buffalo have sufficient pasture lands and resources to maintain the buffalo they receive. In addition to the requirements of ITBC's regular Surplus Buffalo Program, ITBC declares that Yellowstone buffalo are a special source of surplus buffalo due to their pure genetic heritage, importance to Native Americans, and the controversy of their management. For these reasons, their use to enhance genetic diversity of a Member Tribe's buffalo herd shall be the primary consideration when applying for Yellowstone buffalo. *Yellowstone buffalo shall not be distributed to Member Tribes that seek buffalo for non-cultural/spiritual hunting, consumption, or sale.*

Applications for surplus Yellowstone buffalo shall be considered from Active Member Tribes who have submitted the following information to the ITBC office by **Friday, September 3, 2022.**



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Applications may be submitted by email to admin@itbcbuffalonation.org or mailed to our office at 520 Kansas City St, Suite 300, Rapid City, SD 57701.

1. A Tribal Council Resolution and/or other document with the same legal effect as determined by your Tribe's governing documents, signed by an appropriate Tribal Official requesting a specific number of buffalo. If a Tribe is unable to secure a Tribal Council Resolution by the set deadline (**September 3, 2022**), the Tribe may submit a letter explaining why a Tribal Council Resolution is unobtainable by the deadline and that by the date of distribution (December 2021), a Resolution must be submitted to the ITBC office;
2. A report that specifies:
 - a. The current carrying capacity of the identified Tribal pasture lands where the Tribe's buffalo will be maintained;
 - b. The Tribe's current number of buffalo on the identified pasture lands;
 - c. The number of additional buffalo the Tribe's identified pasture lands can support.
 - d. If necessary, copies of agreements entered into with states, local governments, or private parties, or descriptions of such agreements, necessary to receive surplus buffalo from ITBC;
3. A statement regarding the Tribe's intended purpose for the buffalo;
4. A statement signed by a Tribal government official affirming the Tribe will abide by the guidelines as determined by ITBC's Surplus Buffalo Policy;
5. A current five-year management plan of the Tribe's buffalo project for the ITBC office to retain on file. A Tribe only needs to provide a five-year management plan if the current plan has expired;

After submission of the above required documents by the deadline, ITBC will review and award surplus Yellowstone buffalo requests based upon the following criteria:

1. The purpose of the requested buffalo
2. Transportation feasibility and costs; (Additional consideration will be given to Tribes that have the availability to transport awarded buffalo themselves)
3. The carrying capacity of the requesting Tribe to determine sufficient AUM's to accommodate the number of requested buffalo; and
4. When a Member Tribe last received surplus buffalo.

Each Tribe will be notified of buffalo awarded in writing as soon as applications are reviewed and determinations are made by the Board of Directors.



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Please contact Troy Heinert, Executive Director (troy@itcbuffalonation.org), or Megan Davenport, Wildlife Biologist (megan@itcbuffalonation.org) with any further questions or clarification of the above process and criteria to distribute surplus Yellowstone buffalo. We can be reached by telephone at (605) 394-9730.

Thank you for your prompt attention!

Background info about Yellowstone Buffalo

Yellowstone buffalo, considered the last pure buffalo herd in the United States, were exposed to brucellosis by domestic cattle many years ago. Based on the brucellosis exposure, the State of Montana considered the herd a threat to Montana's cattle industry and adopted legislation that allowed the slaughter of buffalo that exited Yellowstone National Park into Montana. In 1997, after Montana slaughtered over 1000 Yellowstone buffalo, ITBC filed a lawsuit, along with other buffalo preservation groups, against the federal government, to stop the needless killing of the Yellowstone buffalo. ITBC's objective is to preserve the genetic heritage of the Yellowstone buffalo and seek translocation of the animals to Tribal lands. Following commencement of the litigation, the Court ordered that all parties negotiate a plan to address buffalo management that would balance the interests of affected parties and agencies. ITBC, as a litigating party, has been a strong advocate for the preservation of the Yellowstone buffalo and has maintained its position that live Yellowstone buffalo must be translocated to Tribal lands for meaningful preservation.

ITBC, consistent with its objective to preserve Yellowstone buffalo, first proposed a buffalo quarantine program in 1994 that would preserve those buffalo that did not develop brucellosis and translocate them to Tribes. Public support for the quarantine and relocation of buffalo to Tribes has been overwhelming from the outset. However, ITBC faced many challenges and obstacles including federal and state agency opposition and Congressional delays to approve use of quarantine that slowed progress. Despite the obstacles, ITBC has been actively involved over the last 10 years in quarantine programs, committing significant effort and funding to ensure that the quarantine programs continue and that ITBC and Tribes have a role in the process and outcome. ITBC has worked tirelessly to ensure that the Yellowstone buffalo, as the last pure buffalo herd, are preserved and that disease-free buffalo are translocated to Tribes to start new herds or augment existing ones.

ITBC is now most honored to work with the Fort Peck Tribes and their buffalo quarantine facility to ensure that these 2 cohorts of Yellowstone buffalo, certified disease-free by APHIS and the state of Montana, are available to Tribes. Reaching this milestone is a significant accomplishment for ITBC and its Member Tribes in the challenge to restore buffalo to our people. The ITBC Board hopes that all applicants will understand and acknowledge the significance of these buffalo and commit to utilizing them in a manner that will continue preservation of the Yellowstone herd genetics. Based on our concern for preservation, we will be requesting that tribes will commit to non-harvest or sale of these animals.