

FORT BELKNAP
BUFFALO PROGRAM

PLAN SUMMARY

Fort Belknap Indian Community Buffalo Program

FIVE-YEAR CONSERVATION PLAN

OCTOBER 1, 2026 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2031

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THIS IS A SUMMARY DOCUMENT

This document summarizes the Fort Belknap Indian Community Buffalo Program Five-Year Conservation Plan. For the full plan, please contact the Fort Belknap Buffalo Program.

Acknowledgements

Fort Belknap Buffalo Program would like to acknowledge the members of the planning team.

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Background on Buffalo and the Fort Belknap Indian Community

Brief History of the Land and Its People

The Aaniiih and Nakoda Nation, also known as the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC), is located in north central Montana. Forty miles south of the Canadian border and twenty miles north of the Missouri River, the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation is homeland to the Gros Ventre (Aaniiih) and Assiniboiné (Nakoda) Tribes. The Reservation spans parts of Blaine and Phillips Counties and encompasses approximately 629,760 acres (comprised of 406,279 acres in Tribal trust, 192,408 acres' individual allotted trust, 20,150 acres' Tribal fee land, 6,498 acres' individual fee land, and 4,425 acres of state government land. The Tribes also hold mineral and surface rights to approximately 28,395 acres trust and Tribal fee lands in the submarginal lands west of the Reservation.¹ Fort Belknap is the fourth largest reservation in Montana.

The Gros Ventre and Assiniboiné Tribes established their respective territories when they signed the Fort Laramie treaties of 1851 and 1855 with the U.S. Government. The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation was created by Congress on May 1, 1888, and it is governed by the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council. The Council consists of a President and Vice President who serve four-year terms, plus eight members (four from each Tribe) who are elected every two years. Tribal government headquarters are located in Fort Belknap Agency at the northwest corner of the Reservation.

The Aaniiih and Nakoda Nation has 8,308 enrolled members, with more than one-half (4,214 enrolled members) living on the Reservation. There are 115 non-enrolled members living on Fort Belknap Indian Reservation². The Reservation has four main communities: Fort Belknap Agency in the north; Hays and Lodge Pole in the southern part of the Reservation; and the Northeast Corner of the reservation (Dodson area). Harlem is a community just a few miles north of the Reservation where many enrolled members live as well.

Cattle ranching and farming are the main industries. The Reservation's rolling prairie hills, mountains, streams, culture, and wildlife, in addition to its proximity to the American Prairie Reserve and Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, make tourism another promising industry. Additionally, the Mission Canyon area offers popular attractions like the Natural

¹ Source: BIA 2016

² Fort Belknap Planning Department 2021 census data

Bridge, Wilson Park, Devil's Kitchen, and Needle Eye, and Kid Curry's Hideout. FBIC and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are major employers.

Geography

Bordered to the north by the Milk River, the Reservation has marked geographic features. The Reservation primarily has prairie grasslands, but it hosts parts of the Little Rocky Mountains in the south and Snake Butte, a sacred site, in the north. As part of the North American Great Plains region, this semi-arid area is characterized by flat to undulating grassland underlain by glacial till and alluvial bottomlands, providing ideal habitat for grassland wildlife. The Reservation is within the Missouri River watershed, and it contains five reservoirs: Old Woman Reservoir, Weigand Reservoir, Government Field Reservoir, Seventeen Mile Reservoir, and Lake Seventeen. Peoples Creek, Little Peoples Creek, Lodgepole Creek, Three Mile Creek and Warm Springs Creek generally flow northward through the Reservation. Elevation on the Reservation ranges from about 2,300 to 5,000 feet.

Agriculture is the predominant land use on the Reservation with more than 60% of the land being used for farming and ranching activities (approximately 388,900 acres). Ranching activities account for 42% of the land and farming accounts for 23%.³ Most of the grazing land on the Reservation is composed of native grassland and shrubland habitats.

Two large open-pit, cyanide heap leach gold mines were opened in 1979, just south of the Reservation. The Zortman-Landusky mines have since contaminated surface and groundwater resources, destroyed sacred sites, and degraded and eliminated wildlife habitat. Since 1992, the Tribes have worked through the U.S. courts to try to shut down and bring the mines into compliance with environmental and water quality standards.

Wildlife on the Reservation include the endangered black-footed ferret, black-tailed prairie dogs, pronghorn, bear, moose, grassland birds, white-tailed and mule deer, beaver, wild turkey, elk, mountain lion, Northern Leopard frog, and aquatic species like walleye, among many others.

Fort Belknap Buffalo Program

Our program, the Fort Belknap Buffalo Program (FBBP), has been in place since the 1970s, beginning with people who decided to give a place for the buffalo to roam on Fort Belknap.

³ FBIC Final Agricultural Resource Management Plan and Programmatic Environmental Assessment

In 1974, the Assiniboine Treaty Committee purchased 30 buffalo, some coming from Theodore Roosevelt National Park in western North Dakota and some from the National Bison Range (which is now the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Bison Range, located on the Flathead Reservation). In 2014, Fort Belknap Indian Community signed the Buffalo Treaty, one of the first Tribes to do so. The Buffalo Treaty is a living agreement between Indigenous Nations to restore the buffalo to the land, the people, and our way of life. Since it was first signed in 2014, Indigenous Nations across Canada and the United States have continued to sign on, united in their shared commitment to restore buffalo to the land and renew cultural, spiritual, and ecological relationships.

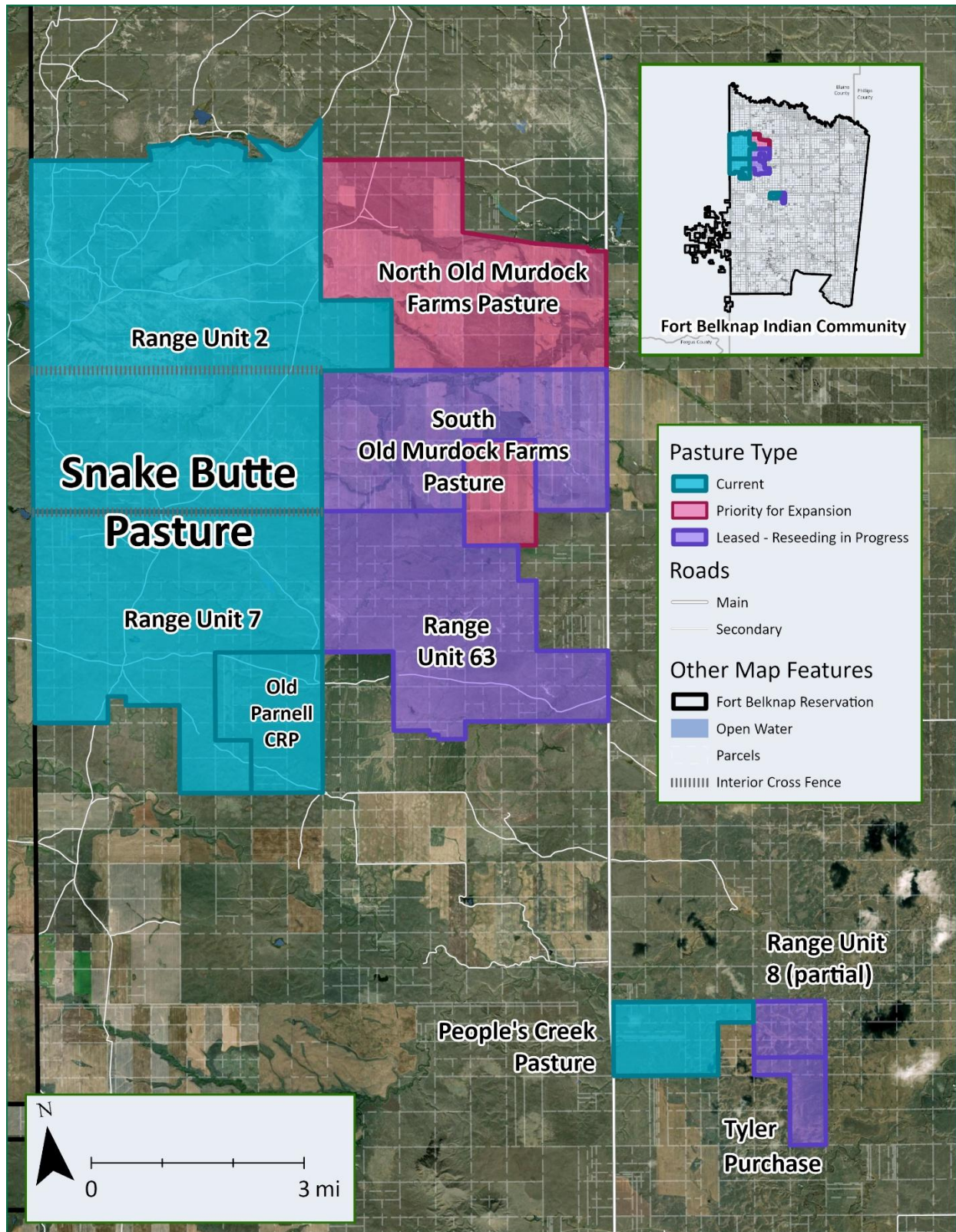
The Tribes currently manage two bison herds over 34,713 acres (see Table 1), with an average buffalo herd size of 700 on Snake Butte Pasture (the Snake Butte Herd) and 162 animals of genetically pure Yellowstone bison on Peoples Creek Pasture (the Yellowstone Herd) (see Figure 1). The Snake Butte Herd is managed for conservation and to provide income for FBBP's economic sustainability. The Yellowstone Herd is managed with an emphasis on providing education, research, and community engagement, as well as to interject genetic diversity into the Snake Butte Herd. Cultural practices are encouraged in both herds.

As illustrated in Figure 1, FBBP has leased lands east of the Snake Butte and Peoples Creek Pastures where World Wildlife Fund Great Plains Program (WWF) is reseeding cropland areas to restore grasslands where FBBP intends to introduce buffalo in the future. FBBP has also identified "priority" lands adjacent to Snake Butte Pasture, South Old Murdock Farms Pasture, and/or Peoples Creek Pasture that are priorities for future expansion (See Table 1, Figure 1, and Goal 2.2).

Table 1: FBBP Pastureland Acres by Current Pastureland, Leased Pastureland, Priority Pastureland, and Fencing Status

Name	Category	Buffalo Fencing Status	US Survey Acres
North Old Murdock Farms	Priority	Unfenced	5,497.48
South Old Murdock Farms - 5 parcel	Priority	Unfenced	960.05
South Old Murdock Farms - Other	Leased	In progress	4,461.64
Range Unit 63	Leased	In progress	5,465.11
Range Unit 8	Leased	In progress	509.89
Tyler Purchase	Leased	In progress	479.04
Peoples Creek	Current	Fenced	1,073.50
Range Unit 2	Current	Fenced	13,890.02
Range Unit 7	Current	Fenced	7,155.71
Old Parnell	Current	Fenced	1,677.84
Priority Future Pasturelands			6,457.53
Current and Leased Pasturelands			34,712.75
TOTAL CURRENT, LEASED, AND PRIORITY PASTURELANDS			41,170.28

Figure 1: Map of FBBP's Current Pasturelands, Priority Lands for Expansion, and Reseeding Areas (map created by Tony Morsette, BNGA)



Buffalo, FBBP, Food Sovereignty, and Food Security

Buffalo, food sovereignty, and food security are connected, and FBBP serves as an important source of healthy food in the community. It is estimated that over 90% of the clientele of the food bank in Blaine County are Tribal members, and 98% of people who go to the Harlem food bank are Tribal members. With high levels of food insecurity on the reservation, buffalo meat can offer an important food source.

The 1996 Food and Agriculture Organization World Food Summit defined *food security* as existing when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. *Food sovereignty* implies the “rights of people to define how they will hunt, grow, gather, sell, [trade], and give away food with respect to their own cultures and own systems of management of natural resources”.⁴ Food sovereignty calls for control over the way food is celebrated, consumed, and managed.⁵

The greatest threats to food security across the United States are the high costs of healthy, nutrient-dense foods and limited availability and selection of foods.⁶ Factors linked to food insecurity include lack of transportation, health challenges, discrimination, and low income.⁷

In Tribal communities, access to native foods, like buffalo meat, can increase food security.⁸ Native foods can also serve as emergency food sources for Tribes, most recently seen as some Tribes harvested buffalo to feed their communities when the 2025 federal government shutdown interrupted food assistance across the nation, including Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Crow Tribe, and Blackfeet Nation.⁹

⁴ Gurney, R.M., Caniglia, B.S., Mix, T.L., & Baum, K.A. (2015). Native American Food Security and Traditional Foods: A Review of the Literature. *Sociology Compass*, 9, 681-693.

⁵ Bye, B. A. L. A. (2009). *Native food systems organizations strengthening sovereignty and (re)building community* (Publication No. 1473189) [Master's thesis, Iowa State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁶ Brown, Blakely & PhD, Curtis & PhD, Mark. (2007). Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Health-Associated Outcomes and Food Characteristics of Northern Plains Indian Households. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*. 1. 37-53. 10.1300/J477v01n04_04.

⁷ Feeding America. (n.d.) *Hunger and Food Insecurity*. Retrieved December 19, 2025, from <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>

⁸ Sowerwine, J., Mucioki, M., Sarna-Wojcicki, D., & Hillman, L. (2019). Reframing food security by and for Native American communities: A case study among Tribes in the Klamath River Basin of Oregon and California.

⁹ Matthew Brown and Graham Lee Brewer, T. A. P. and A. S. (2025, November 12). *Tribes that restored Buffalo are killing some to feed people because of the shutdown*. Montana Free Press. <https://montanafreepress.org/2025/11/12/montana-tribes-using-bison-to-feed-people-during-shutdown/>

Every year, FBBP distributes around 20 buffalo (with an average of 400 pounds of processed meat per buffalo) to the Tribe, distributed by the Commodity Center to seniors, plus distribution to powwow committees, Sundance, and other cultural events. Between January and July 2025 alone, the buffalo program supplied Day Eagle Hope Project with over 30,000 pounds of ground buffalo. Over the same period, FBBP sold ten buffalo to other Tribal nations' food programs, particularly Rocky Boy's Buffalo Child Ranch and Fast Blackfeet Food Bank.

Major FBBP achievements to date

FBBP has achieved many important social and environmental outcomes, including:

- Provided 244,000 meals of buffalo meat to the Fort Belknap Indian Community in 2025
- Hosted the First Annual "Buffalo Day" in August 2025, in collaboration with Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC), with 450 people participating and 80 participants on the tour of the buffalo herd
- Every year, since at least 2014, have provided buffalo meat for ceremonies and funerals
- Since 2014, provided hunting opportunities for at least 20 - 50 Tribal members each year
- Since 2023, field-based educational opportunities provided for 20 students through partnership with ANC
- Since 2023, field-based educational opportunities provided for interns through partnership with ANC
- Since 2005, collaborated with the Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department to provide 3,000 acres of habitat for endangered black-footed ferret
- Since the early 2000's, have met some of the demand for buffalo in the region by selling buffalo to Tribes like Fort Peck, Chippewa Cree, and Blackfeet
- Since 2022, partnered with three Tribal buffalo programs in the region to enhance buffalo management best practices, research, and education across Native Nations

Recent grant awards, including those listed below, have provided the opportunity for us to grow as a program:

- First Nations Development Institute – Stewarding Native Lands Program
- First Nations Development Institute – Buffalo Restoration on Tribal Lands
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – America the Beautiful Challenge
- InterTribal Buffalo Council – Herd Development Grant

Partnership with ANC

Our partnership with Aaniiih Nakoda College (ANC) has enhanced our ability to serve the FBIC. In December 2021, ANC received funding from the National Science Foundation for the Tribal Enterprise Advancement Center project. The project has established the ᑭítaanoóńᑭí/Tatag'a (Buffalo) Research and Education Center. The Buffalo Center conducts ecological research on the Fort Belknap buffalo herd and its associated grassland habitat and species, and it offers education programs to prepare future caretakers of tribal wildlife and associated natural resources and to increase community knowledge of, and support for, sustainable management of Fort Belknap's buffalo herds and buffalo habitat. As a result, FBBP has and will continue to receive wide-ranging support from planning guidance, survey design guidance, research design, testing, herd health, and advice and mentorship.

Following suit with the Fort Belknap Indian Community, ANC signed the Buffalo Treaty in 2023 to further their commitment to bison restoration.

Survey of Our Community

On August 13, 2025, FBBP surveyed 450 participants who attended our inaugural Buffalo Days event. One hundred people completed the five-question survey. The following are key results from the survey:

- 100% of survey respondents indicated they would be interested in receiving buffalo meat.
- When inquiring about their preferred cuts of meat, 30% of respondents expressed a strong preference for buffalo burgers, while another 30% favored organ meat, emphasizing the diverse culinary possibilities that buffalo can offer. Meanwhile, 20% of respondents chose roast, and the remaining 20% opted for short ribs, illustrating varying tastes and preparation methods.
- Over 60% of survey respondents indicated they lacked familiarity with proper techniques for preparing buffalo meat. This highlights a significant gap in knowledge within the community regarding traditional culinary practices.
- Only 10% of respondents indicated that they had ever taken part in a traditional buffalo harvest, with the majority of the people who indicated they had taken part being 50 years or older. This statistic points to a potential generational divide in both knowledge and experience concerning buffalo hunting and its utilization as a food source within the community. It raises concerns about the transmission of traditional practices to younger generations and the ongoing relationship with this culturally significant animal.

- 60% of respondents indicated they would like to learn more about the nutritional benefits and preparation methods for buffalo. This indicates a promising opportunity for educational outreach initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of traditional culinary practices and enhancing the community's overall familiarity with buffalo as a nutritious food source.

Interested Parties

Interested parties are individuals, groups, organizations, Tribes, agencies, and other entities that will impact and/or be impacted by a plan or program. FBBP recognizes it is key to continue partnerships because they bring funding and capacity to the Buffalo Program. FBBP wants to strengthen and maintain those partnerships to do shared work and toward visions.

FBBP coordinates efforts (or would like to do so during the next five years) with people in the Fort Belknap Indian Community, as well as Fort Belknap Tribal entities, non-Tribal entities in Fort Belknap Indian Community, including organizations promoting food sovereignty, state and federal entities, regional Tribal entities, and non-governmental entities. See the full plan for detailed descriptions of interested parties, including partners.

Purpose of the Conservation Plan

The purpose of the plan is to summarize what FBBP intends to achieve, why, where, how, and by when. It does so by describing the:

- Vision and purpose for FBBP, and geographic scope of FBBP's activities
- Key species, habitats, and human well-being targets, and main factors affecting them
- Main strategies, and time-specific goals, activities, and indicators over a five-year period

Vision, Purpose, and Scope

Vision

The Fort Belknap Indian Community and its Buffalo program aim to ensure the sustainability of our buffalo initiative while fostering a deep connection among our community members, elders, and children to our traditions and our commitment to caring for the buffalo, which have cared for us. As Aaniiih and Nakoda people, we are

dedicated to preserving the longevity and cultural well-being of our buffalo, grasslands, and ecosystems for future generations.

Purpose

We strengthen our cultural connection with the buffalo and showcase our efforts in conservation, restoration, and herd health. The foundation of the Fort Belknap Buffalo Program is centered on restoring healthy buffalo populations and revitalizing grasslands. We aim to rebuild our relationship with the land while promoting economic growth, food sovereignty, educational opportunities, and cultural well-being for the Fort Belknap Indian Community, ensuring a bright future for our generations to come.

Geographic Scope

FBBP manages buffalo on Tribal trust lands within the Fort Belknap Reservation. See the full plan for detailed descriptions of land managed.

Time Period for the Conservation Plan

Fort Belknap Indian Community and the FBBP operate on a fiscal year that runs from October 1st to September 30th. This five-year Conservation Plan is based on Fort Belknap Indian Community's fiscal year, for the period from October 1, 2026 – September 30, 2031.

Situation Analysis

This section summarizes our priority planning areas, the priority species, habitat, and human well-being targets that FBBP seeks to protect and provide for Tribal members and others who reside in, live near to, or visit the Reservation. It also describes direct threats and contributing factors expected to significantly affect the planning areas over the next five years. (For information on FBBP's activities and intended impacts, see the *Strategies, Goals, and Activities* section.)

Priority species and habitat types for the purpose of this plan are species and habitat types that we would like to impact through buffalo management and restoration.

Human well-being targets are impacts on people and communities we have selected to focus on through our buffalo management and restoration efforts.

The conservation plan focuses on the following planning areas:

- **Buffalo**
- **Grasslands**

- **Food sovereignty**
- **Culture**
- **Education**
- **Black-footed ferret and swift fox**

See the full plan for a detailed description of each planning area.

Direct Threats and Contributing Factors, by Planning Area

The main direct threats and contributing factors (i.e., indirect threats, root/underlying causes, or relevant opportunities) expected to significantly affect our planning areas include overpopulation of buffalo, diseases spread by cattle, sheep, and wildlife, chemicals sprayed in the area, invasive species, fire, limited buffalo meat processing capacity, federal funding decline, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict. Contributing factors include climate breakdown, limited access to land and infrastructure, inability to retain revenue generated by FBBP, lack of revenue diversity and quantity, communication gaps, inadequate policies, and lack of information and timely follow-up by BIA. See the full plan for a detailed description of direct threats and contributing factors by planning area.

Strategies, Goals, and Activities

The following sections summarize FBBP's main strategies and the goals associated with each strategy. For the list of activities FBBP will engage in to achieve the goals, please see the full plan.

Strategies

The following are main strategies, or thematic functions:

- Species management
- Grassland management
- Food sovereignty and security
- Policy
- Community awareness and education
- Sustainable financing
- Management and administration

Strategy 1: Species management

Goal 1.1

Every year, maintain at least 150 head of buffalo in Yellowstone Herd and at least 700 head of buffalo in the Snake Butte Herd, on at least a

combined 34,713 acres, while ensuring buffalo numbers do not exceed the carrying capacity of the grasslands.

Note: Additional details on carrying capacity determination, how buffalo demographics will be managed and buffalo selected for harvest, and other aspects area detailed in the FBBP Herd Management Plan.

Goal 1.2

Every year, implement the herd management plan.

Goal 1.3

Every year, manage visitor access to the buffalo pastures.

Goal 1.4

Every year, ensure there is adequate freshwater to ensure herd and grassland health on all pastures.

Goal 1.5

Every year, ensure prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets are thriving amongst the buffalo within the Snake Butte and Peoples Creek pastures, while also maintaining prime grass areas and sufficient grass for the buffalo herds inside the pastures.

Goal 1.6

Every year, manage prairie dogs in the Old Murdock Farms recently reseeded areas to ensure the new grass is established and weeds are kept at a minimum.

Goal 1.7

Every year, promote coexistence between swift fox, sage grouse, antelope, deer, elk, moose, and buffalo in the pastures.

Strategy 2: Grassland Management

Goal 2.1

Every year, maintain adequate grass to sustain rotational grazing, prevent overgrazing, and limit supplement feeding during winter.

Goal 2.2

By Spring 2028, expand all buffalo pastures from 34,713 to 41,170 acres.

Goal 2.3

Every three months, explore opportunities for acquiring more land for buffalo, including the Gilbert Ranch.

Goal 2.4

In 2026, 2027, and then every two years, commission a range condition assessment from Ranch Advisory partners, in collaboration with WWF and NZCBI.¹⁰

Goal 2.5

Every month, follow the Land Department's policies and use Ranch Advisory Partners' analysis of range conditions and recommendations for stocking rates to make management decisions, and involve NRCS as needed.

Strategy 3: Food sovereignty and security

Goal 3.1

Every year, provide at least 10 buffalo (~6,000 pounds of buffalo meat), equating to 125,000, 4-oz meals, per year to community members, ensuring that only healthy, prime bison meat goes to community members to protect community health.

Goal 3.2

By Spring 2027, and then every six months, provide buffalo meat to the Hays, Lodgepole, Agency, and Dodson Senior Centers.

Goal 3.3

By March 2031, get buffalo meat into the White Clay Immersion School, the Life's Learning Lodge, Head Start, Harlem Public Schools, Hays/Lodgepole Schools, and Dodson Public School and educate students and staff about the health aspects of eating buffalo meat.

Goal 3.4

Every year, work with Tribal programs and nonprofits to support educational opportunities for community members about how to prepare buffalo.

¹⁰ See Appendix for NZCBI's Long-Term Socio-Ecological Research on FBBP Pastureland.

Strategy 4: Policy

Goal 4.1

By Fall 2028, in communication with Tribal Council, determine FBBP's protocol for emergency food distribution (e.g., end of SNAP funding, etc.).

Goal 4.2

By October 2026, establish data sovereignty for FBBP, in partnership with ANC.

Goal 4.3

By Fall 2029, create a safety protocol for FBBP staff and for people using the buffalo pastures.

Goal 4.4

By October 2026, rescind the resolution requiring FBBP to provide buffalo hunts to individuals and keep communicating that all requests must go through FBBP and not the Tribal Council.

Goal 4.5

By October 2026, and then every year, make partners' roles clear regarding drafting of Tribal resolutions.

Strategy 5: Community awareness and education

Goal 5.1

Every month, communicate with the Ft Belknap community so they understand cultural ties to buffalo and know how the FBBP is practicing herd health, benefiting the community, partnering with Tribal and external organizations, about the Buffalo Procurement Protocol, and that the buffalo and buffalo pastures are healthy.

Goal 5.2

Every year, work with ANC, MSU Extension, Tiwahe, and other groups to ensure people are educated about bison and promoting more positive and healthy connections to the buffalo, especially for the younger generations, and to increase support for having buffalo on the landscape.

Goal 5.3

Every year, find out what needs, concerns, and suggestions community

members have about FBBP.

Goal 5.4

Every quarter, communicate with Tribal Council members about FBBP's plans and activities and advocate for retaining revenue generated by FBBP.

Goal 5.5

Every year, maintain a relationship with ANC so that the FBBP can get information gathered by ANC, and so the Buffalo Program provides ANC with training, knowledge, and information.

Goal 5.6

Every year, work with ANC in training and mentoring the next generation of buffalo keepers. This includes:

Strategy 6: Sustainable financing

FBBP will explore and/or seek revenue from the following sources every year: grants, carbon sequestration, buffalo byproduct sales, live buffalo sales, finished buffalo sales, meat sales, hunts by non-Tribal members, hunts by Tribal members, and harvested buffalo sales. To achieve revenue from buffalo and buffalo byproducts, FBBP will first ensure they can maintain a steady state herd size and that they provide an annually-determined number of free buffalo to community partners for a) ceremonies, b) Senior Centers, and c) schools.

Goal 6.1

By October 2026, establish and work closely with a buffalo board to gain added expertise and recommendations to FBBP, assist in maintaining FBBP's alignment with the conservation plan, and to increase connections with the community.

Goal 6.2

By November 2026, set up a revenue agreement with the Council that will provide FBBP with a base level of funding that will allow FBBP to retain a higher percentage of revenue each year to maintain daily sustainability of FBBP operations.

Goal 6.3

By March 2030, establish FBBP as its own entity so FBBP can maintain all

of its revenues.

Goal 6.4

Every quarter, look for new funding opportunities and apply for grants to Fund FBBP.

Goal 6.5

Every quarter, secure private funding opportunities to allow for more flexibility in management and less reporting requirements.

Goal 6.6

By Fall 2029, FBBP will explore and possibly begin generating revenue by selling buffalo byproducts (e.g., tallow, hides, sinew, horns, bones, and manure) that come from FBBP-harvested buffalo.

Goal 6.7

Every year, FBBP will explore and possibly begin generating revenue by selling live buffalo (direct off pasture and/or finished buffalo).

Goal 6.8

By Fall 2027, FBBP will explore and possibly begin generating revenue by selling finished buffalo.

Goal 6.9

By Fall 2030, and once FBBP's office and processing facility is established, FBBP will explore and possibly begin generating revenue by selling buffalo meat (e.g., burger and jerky).

Goal 6.10

Every year, sell buffalo hunts to non-Tribal members.

Goal 6.11

Every year, sell buffalo hunts to Tribal members.

Goal 6.12

Every year, sell buffalo that FBBP staff have harvested.

Strategy 7: Management and administration

To increase management and administrative capacity to fulfill the conservation plan by ensuring sufficient staff are hired, trained, and retained. Management and administration includes all general functions (general management, financial administration, operations, maintenance, human resources, legal, fundraising, etc.) and inputs for those functions (staff, land leases, infrastructure, heavy equipment, field equipment, office equipment, etc.) that are not covered by the other strategies.

Current Staff Positions and Organization

FBBP currently has four, full-time, permanent staff positions and one, full-time seasonal position.

Positions:

Buffalo Director

Bronc Speakthunder (Permanent; full-time)

Duties: Manages the program on a day-to-day basis and make sure everything is running efficiently. Supervises all program staff. Coordinates with Tribal programs and external partners. Fundraises. Facilitates the buffalo hunts. Ensures herd health. Manages all sales. Manages herd and pasture health. Reports to Council on a monthly basis. Provides guidance to other buffalo programs, assisting with problem-solving. Learns and adapts, using new approaches to managing the program.

Finance and Management Specialist

Yvonne Stanley (Permanent through December 2026; full-time)

Duties: Responsible for accomplishing federal grant objectives and obligations within the guidelines established by FBIC Grants and Contracts policy, finance policy and National Fish & Wildlife Grant award and special conditions. Serves as an administrative assistant to the Buffalo Program and, under policy supervision of the FBIC Buffalo Manager, act as coordinator for sub recipient goals and responsibilities. Provides project oversight and coordination on the America the Beautiful Challenge projects for respective tribes and submits timely reports to the grantor. Prepare and submit financial reports to the FBIC Council and funding agencies. Plans, organizes, integrates and aspects of the FBIC Buffalo Program and activities.

Buffalo Technicians

James Cochran (Permanent through December 2026; full-time)

Duties: Responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and care of the tribal buffalo herd and accomplishing federal grant objectives. Oversee the buffalo hunting and buffalo sales. Keep accurate records of buffalo herd composition, sales and harvest data. Organizing and summarizing ecological survey data collections. Collaborate with partners on the America the Beautiful Challenge Grant (AtBC) to complete annual ecological surveys and buffalo herd monitoring.

Shaun Ball (Permanent through December 2026; full-time)

Duties: Responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and care of the tribal buffalo herd and accomplishing federal grant objectives. Oversee the buffalo hunting and buffalo sales. Keep accurate records of buffalo herd composition, sales and harvest data. Organizing and summarizing ecological survey data collections. Collaborate with partners on AtBC to complete annual ecological surveys and buffalo herd monitoring

Field Technician

Cody Fortin (Temporary, usually working through spring, summer, and fall; full-time)

Additional Staff Positions Needed

FBBP needs to add positions to reach the following staffing:

- 1 full-time, permanent Office/Tech Assistant
- 1 part-time, permanent Herd Health Manager
- 1 full-time, permanent Meat Processing and Marketing Assistant
- 2 temporary, seasonal, full-time Buffalo Technicians (each year)
- 5 temporary, full-time Short-Term Laborers for short-term projects (each year)

Consultants

FBBP will need to contract people to provide:

- Veterinary assistance
- Technical assistance

Goal 7.1

Every year, provide management, financial administration, human resources, and operations oversight to effectively and efficiently fulfill responsibilities of the FBBP.

Goal 7.2

By October 2026, develop a FBBP employee policy and procedures for holding employees accountable to a certain standard.

Goal 7.3

By October 2027, establish a facility at South Murdock Farm that will house an office, a visitor center, equipment storage, and serve as a place to process up to three buffalo, a cooler for whole buffalo, and a freezer for processed meat. Adjacent to the facility will be a holding area for 50 - 100 animals.

Goal 7.4

By May 2028, explore establishing a handling facility in the southwest corner of Old Murdock Farms to facilitate trapping buffalo for culling purposes.

Goal 7.5

By October 2027, centralize data within FBBP.

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