

TO: Representative Paul Seaton, Co-Chairman  
Representative Eric Feige, Co-Chairman  
House Resources Committee

FROM: Representative Alan Dick, Sponsor

DATE: February 15, 2012

RE: HJR 32: REMOVE WOOD BISON FROM ENDANGERED LIST

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I respectfully request that the House Resources Committee schedule HJR 32 for a hearing at its earliest convenience.

HJR 32 was introduced as a means of opening the way for wood bison to be reintroduced into Alaska under management of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and without the significant impact on resource development that currently accompanies their status as a protected species.

The resolution asks Congress to intervene by removing wood bison from protected status under the Endangered Species Act – as it did recently with grey wolves.

Removing them from the list would be the single most important action that could be taken to facilitate their reintroduction and recovery - as it would remove the obstacles that have prevented their reintroduction. It is their status as protected, and the onerous restrictions that accompany them, that have kept them from being released into the wild in Alaska.

After nearly 20 years of efforts on the part of ADF&G to import and release wood bison without negative impact on resource development ADF&G remains gridlocked in its negotiations with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service because yet another lawsuit has been filed challenging whether or not they can be hunted while on the protected list.

The constant filing of lawsuits challenging the negotiated agreements, and the fact that judges around the country are changing the rules from the bench, makes it impossible to have confidence that the agreements won't be nullified once the bison are in the wild.

The wood bison that are currently in captivity in Alaska came from Canada where restoration efforts have increased their numbers from near extinction to more than 10,000. Their numbers are currently being managed through hunting and the animals sent to Alaska were taken from among the number that would otherwise have been harvested as a part of the hunt. They were designated as a non-essential experimental population which means that if none of them survived there would be no negative affect on the continued recovery of wood bison in Canada.

For questions related to this bill, please contact my legislative Aide, Paul Verhagen at 465-2847.