

COMMITTEE REPORT  
SENATE

FURTHER:

2/23/84

Date 4/27/84

Mr. President

The Committee on FINANCE considered SB 337

Public Junction Bison range: etc.

and (a majority of the committee) (the committee) reports it back with the following recommendations:

- do pass
- do pass with attached amendment(s)
- replace with/or adopt CS for SB 337 (Res)
- new title
- same title and recommends Individual Recommendations
- and attached a "LETTER OF INTENT"  NEW FISCAL NOTE  
@ FN 2/16/84 DWR
- reports it back without recommendation
- recommends referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

MEMBERS SIGNING  
DO PASS

MEMBERS HAVING  
OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

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Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF ALASKA 1984 LEGISLATIVE SESSION  
FISCAL NOTE

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_

REQUEST  
Bill/Resolution No.: SB 337  
Title: Delta Junction Bison Range  
Sponsor: Moss  
Requestor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Request: 1/9/84

FISCAL DETAIL  
Agency Affected: Natural Resources  
Program Category Affected: Presuppression / North central Small Timber Sale  
BRU, Program or Subprogram(s) Affected: Forest Management / Forest Management

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY 84	FY 85	FY 86	FY 87	FY 88	FY 89
OPERATING						
100 PERSONAL SERVICES						
200 TRAVEL						
300 CONTRACTUAL						
400 SUPPLIES						
500 EQUIPMENT						
600 LAND & STRUCTURES						
700 GRANTS, CLAIMS						
800 MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING						
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

SOURCE OF FUNDS TO OFFSET FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL:

SB 338 appropriates \$60,000 from the general fund to the Department of Natural Resources for administration of timber sales and fire suppression on the Delta Bison Range

ANALYSIS: Attach a separate page for analysis

Prepared By: Carol Wilson Phone: 465-2400  
Division: Commissioner's Office Date: 2-16-84  
Approved by Commissioner: William D. Arnold, Deputy Date: 2-16-84  
Agency: Department of Natural Resources

Distribution (by Agency preparing fiscal note):

Legislative Finance  
Legislative Sponsor  
Requestor  
Office of Management and Budget  
Impacted Agency(ies)

12/1/83

STATE OF ALASKA 1984 LEGISLATIVE SESSION  
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Agency: Department of Natural Resources

Distribution (by Agency preparing fiscal note).

Legislative Finance  
Legislative Sponsor  
Requestor  
Office of Management and Budget  
Impacted Agency(ies)

12/1/83

Offered: 2/28/84  
Referred: Finance

Original sponsor: Moss

1 IN THE SENATE BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
2 CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 337 (Resources)  
3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
4 THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION  
5 A BILL  
6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to the Delta Junction bison range;  
7 and providing for an effective date."  
8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:  
9 \* Section 1. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS. The legislature finds that  
10 (1) the Delta Junction bison herd is a highly valued state  
11 wildlife resource;  
12 (2) drawing permits issued for the hunting of Delta Junction  
13 bison constitute a valuable source of state revenue;  
14 (3) the Delta Junction bison herd has established the Delta  
15 agricultural project as a fall and winter range;  
16 (4) the feeding, wallowing, and traveling by the Delta Junction  
17 bison herd within the Delta agricultural project has resulted in damage to  
18 crops, monetary loss to local farmers, legal conflicts, and physical harm  
19 to the herd;  
20 (5) the bison range concept is a proven means of keeping bison  
21 in an area as long as adequate forage is available on the range;  
22 (6) the current state of development of the Delta Junction bison  
23 range area is inadequate to sustain bison for more than a few weeks;  
24 (7) the expansion of available forage on the Delta Junction  
25 bison range area is required to provide a winter range for the Delta Junc-  
26 tion bison herd and to effectively keep the herd from grazing within the  
27 Delta agricultural project; and  
28 (8) a bison drift barrier must be constructed along the northern  
29 boundary of the Delta Junction Bison Range to prevent the Delta Junction

1 bison herd from drifting onto the project and causing further harm to  
2 crops.

3 \* Sec. 2. AS 16.05.346 is repealed and reenacted to read:

4 Sec. 16.05.346. PERMIT APPLICATIONS. (a) If the Board of Game  
5 establishes an open season for musk oxen and has not reduced or elimi-  
6 nated the \$500 resident tag fee under AS 16.05.340(a)(16), the depart-  
7 ment shall conduct a drawing for permits to take the musk oxen. If  
8 the Board of Game establishes an open season for musk oxen for which  
9 the Board of Game has reduced or eliminated the resident tag fee, the  
10 department shall issue permits to take the musk oxen in the order in  
11 which applications are received by the department. A person is not  
12 eligible for more than one musk oxen permit a year. The department  
13 may not charge a fee for an application for a musk oxen permit for an  
14 open season in which the Board of Game has reduced or eliminated the  
15 resident tag fee under AS 16.05.340(a)(16). In all other cases the  
16 application fee for a musk oxen permit is \$10.

17 (b) The application fee for a drawing permit issued by the  
18 department for the hunting of bison in the Delta Junction bison range  
19 area is \$10.

20 (c) Except as provided in (a) and (b) of this section, the  
21 permit application fee for all species for which a limited drawing is  
22 conducted is \$5.

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11 \* Sec. 4. AS 16.20 is amended by adding new sections to read:

12 Sec. 16.20.311. BISON RANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) The  
13 governor shall appoint a seven-member Delta Junction Bison Range  
14 Advisory Committee. The governor shall appoint members to represent  
15 the following interests:

16 (1) two members representing the Delta agricultural proj-  
17 ect;

18 (2) two members representing Delta Junction sport hunters  
19 and the state fish and game advisory committee;

20 (3) one member representing nonconsumptive wildlife users;

21 (4) one member representing timber, mining and other con-  
22 sumptive natural resource industries; and

23 (5) one member representing the tourism industry.

24 (b) The committee shall consult with and offer its advice to the  
25 Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Commerce and Economic  
26 Development, and the Alaska Agricultural Action Council, on matters  
27 relating to the game management plan required under AS 16.20.310 and  
28 the construction and maintenance of a bison drift barrier along the  
29 northern boundary of the Delta Junction Bison Range.

1 (c) A member of the advisory committee is not entitled to per  
2 diem, travel, or other compensation from the state for the performance  
3 of acts as a committee member.

4 Sec. 16.20.312. BISON RANGE TIMBER SALES. The Department of  
5 Natural Resources, division of forestry, shall provide for the sale of  
6 timber in the Delta Junction bison range area in a manner that does  
7 not delay implementation of the game management plan required under  
8 AS 16.20.310.

9 \* Sec. 5. AS 16.20.300, 16.20.310, 16.20.311, 16.20.312, and 16.20.320  
10 are repealed.

11 \* Sec. 6. Section 3, ch. 39, SLA 1979 and sec. 1, ch. 73, SLA 1980 are  
12 repealed.

13 \* Sec. 7. Sections 1, 2, 4, and 6 of this Act take effect July 1, 1984.

14 \* Sec. 8. Sections 3 and 5 of this Act take effect August 1, 1995.

CHAIRMAN  
SENATE TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE  
SENATE SPECIAL AGRICULTURE  
COMMITTEE

MEMBER  
HEALTH, EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL SERVICES  
COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
REAA BUDGET OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE

# Alaska State Legislature



## State Senate

SENATOR  
H. PAPPY MOSS  
PO BOX 182  
DELTA JUNCTION, ALASKA 99827  
(907) 895-4384

JUNEAU OFFICE  
POUCH V  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801  
(907) 465-4921

### SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE Senator H. Pappy Moss, Chairman

\*\*\*

SENATE BILL 337/338

February 17, 1984

- Senate Bill 337: "An Act relating to the Delta Junction bison range; and providing for an effective date."
- Senate Bill 338: "An Act making special appropriations for development of the Delta Junction bison range and construction of a bison herd drift barrier; and providing for an effective date."

Ever since agriculture was introduced into the Delta area there has been a conflict between the bison and the farmers. Senate Bills 337 and 338 are introduced to offer a lasting solution to the problems created by bison getting hungry at the same time that the farmers' crops are ripening in the fields.

These two bills would provide for the development of an alternative feeding area to the agricultural developments for the bison's fall and winter range. In addition to providing for forage for bison, SR 337 and 338 would provide for the construction of a bison drift barrier to aid in keeping the bison herd from drifting into the agricultural fields. These bills also provide for timber sales on the range, expansion of tourist facilities, and the creation of a Bison Range Advisory Committee.

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
Senator H. Pappy Moss, Chairman

NOTES ON THE DELTA JUNCTION BISON RANGE

February, 1984

BACKGROUND

The Delta Junction Bison Range was established by the Alaska Legislature in 1979 to "provide an adequate winter range for the bison," and to "diminish the damage caused by the herds to agriculturally developed land." The 70,000 acre Range grew out of the Delta Land Use Plan, in which citizens and agencies involved in resource management recommended that the land north of the mountains and south of the Alaska Highway should be used for recreation and wildlife, especially bison, and the land north of the highway should be developed for agriculture.

THE PROBLEM

Shortly after their arrival in the Delta area in 1928, a pattern of annual bison movements began to emerge. During summer, the animals spent their time on the gravel bars along the Delta River, and in fall they gradually moved to the Delta area to take advantage of the open forests. Later in the winter, they slowly moved back toward Delta River. This basic movement pattern continues today.

When small farms were developed in the Delta area in the early 1950's, the grain fields in the farming area became, and will continue to be until some alternative has been provided, a major part of the bison's winter range. The development of the Bison Range will provide diversion feed areas, and as they are increased in size, they will become able to support the bison throughout the winter periods.

THE SOLUTION

The effectiveness of providing an alternate range to the agriculture fields has been shown. As land on the Range has been cleared and planted, bison use of the range has increased and agricultural damage has been reduced. Implementation of Senate Bills 337 and 338 would provide fall bison range to reduce or eliminate crop depredations; increase bison winter range; and also provide a variety of habitats for game and nongame species. Recreational opportunities including hunting, trapping, viewing, and photography would be enhanced. Timber resources would be harvested, offsetting the costs of development over time and boosting the local economy.

QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS ON THE BISON HERD  
AND BISON RANGE DEVELOPMENT

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Senator H. Pappy Moss  
February, 1984

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1. How many bison are in the herd today?

According to Dave Johnson, Fish and Game Biologist at Delta Junction, there are between 300 and 325 bison now in the herd. His approximate figure is 321. By the spring, immediately prior to calving, this number will have been reduced by roadkills and hunting to approximately 300.

2. How many farms are actually impacted by the bison damage?

Before development of the Delta I & II projects, the bison roamed the Clearwater/Big Delta agricultural areas. Since the Delta I & II projects have been producing crops, most of the damage done has occurred there. In 1983, the winter bison range supported the bison herd through September, significantly reducing the amount of damage to crops. However, by September, having depleted the forage on the winter range, the bison moved across the highway to the Brehmer tract and up the Gerstle River to the Mitchell and Rutt tracts where they still caused considerable damage to the crops.

The damage to the crops is caused by the bison eating, trampling, and wallowing in the fields, and also by contamination of certified fields through the introduction of non-certified grains and weeds via the bison's droppings.

3. Is there any barrier currently in place and what exactly is a bison drift barrier?

There is currently no bison drift barrier in place. The proposed bison drift barrier is a training device more than a physical barrier. It is a type of fence that is commonly used in bison and other wildlife management. The barrier is constructed of four high tensile strength smooth steel wires, two of which are electrified.

The barrier will not contain the herd, but will deflect their movement away from the agricultural areas.

4. How important is the barrier to the effectiveness of this bill?

The main emphasis of the bill is the development of the winter range for the bison. The development of the range will largely control the bison herd by providing a diversionary planting which will be an attractive alternative to the agricultural fields. The barrier reinforces the use of the bison range by the herd by deflecting their movement back into that area.

The conflict between the bison and the farmers develops between August and October. This harvesting time for the farmer coincides with the depletion of the bison's currently available winter forage.

5. Why is an Advisory Committee necessary?

There are few issues that an entire community can come to total agreement on. The City of Delta Junction, from a diversity of areas within the community, uniformly supports the bison herd. Input from Advisory Committee members representing the Delta agricultural project; nonconsumptive wildlife users; timber, mining and other consumptive natural resource industries; and tourism would offer local advice to the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, and the Alaska Agricultural Action Council. Local participation in the development of a game management plan and the construction and maintenance of the bison drift barrier would help maintain the consolidated support for the bison projects within the community. The Advisory Committee, representing all concerned factions of the community would be of considerable help to the state departments in developing policies in a mood of compromise and single purpose, rather than in conflict.

Members of the Advisory Committee would not be entitled to per diem, travel, or other compensation from the state for their duties as committee members, so there would be no fiscal impact from this portion of the bill.

6. What tourist facilities exist at this time, and what type are being proposed?

There are currently no tourist facilities at the Bison Range. There is a general tourist information center in the City of Delta Junction about 13 miles to the northwest which is operated by the Chamber of Commerce. There is no special presentation there, or at the range, where the bison project and the bison range could be explained to the public at this time.

Simple viewing platforms are being proposed. There are two well sites on the range where pools would be developed and salt would be placed to attract the bison. In nearby groves of trees, elevated

platforms with slots or holes in plywood fronts facing the watering holes would be set up. These platforms would provide viewing and photography sites where tourists could observe the bison without disturbing them. These sites would be within reasonable walking distance from the highway. These facilities will be simple and relatively easy to build and maintain.

Future development of the tourist facilities at the range would be gradual and based upon the use and demand placed upon the existing facilities. A more elaborate facility might include an information station or an interpretation center at the range and special guided tours into the range. Any funds generated by offering these tours, or through sale of publications at the information center, could be fed back into the program to further develop walking trails or interpretive exhibits at the range.

7. What type of burning is required to clear the range?

Originally, naturally caused wildfires periodically swept the range, keeping it clear of brush and deciduous growth. The absence of brush allowed the winds to sweep the range clear of snow, enabling the bison to graze throughout the winter. When the area became populated, the wildfires were strictly controlled, and much of the grazing area became covered with dense brush. This allowed the snow to accumulate in drifts, burying what grazing range had been left available to the bison in their original winter range.

The burning which will be required to clear the range will duplicate the action of the natural wildfires by removing the brush thereby increasing light and moisture available to the natural grass seed. The natural grasses will be able to grow back and become re-established as a perennial. The low brush which does follow after such prescribed burning creates a browse for moose, which also inhabit the range area.

Prescribed burning takes place under strictly controlled conditions with extreme precautions against mishap. Only when wind and moisture conditions are exactly right for that operation, would the burning be allowed. Extensive measures are taken to insure safety during this operation which involves the use of a helicopter and over 60 people to monitor the burn. The cost of providing a range by this method of burning and natural seeding is approximately \$20/acre as compared to \$100/acre for conventional clearing and seeding.

8. Why are the hunt permit fees being raised, and who administers the Bison Hunt Permits?

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issues the Bison Hunt Permits. There were 75 permits issued last year among 10,000 applicants. The plan to raise the fee for application from five dollars to ten dollars will increase the revenue from that sale to about \$100,000 to the state. The additional \$50,000 obtained is approximately the same amount as would be required to maintain the larger bison range. The increase in permit application fees is supported by the Alaska Outdoors Council.

9. Is there currently any timber harvesting on the bison range?

Within the bison range there has already been some small scale timber sales. Some areas within the bison range have been marked for timber sales, and the sales would be administered by the Division of Forestry. Approximately \$32,000 is expected to be derived from sales of firewood and pole cutting after burns. Increased revenues would be obtained by commercial sales. This combined personal use/commercial timber harvest sale would be managed by staff from the Delta area already employed by the Division of Forestry.

10. Is the range a bison reserve to be used exclusively by the bison?

No, in addition to serving as the bison's winter range, the area would also serve moose, caribou and other wildlife indigenous to the area. The range would provide a new habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and additional hunting opportunities for bison, moose, bear, grouse, hares, and furbearers. The area is also used for recreational purposes as well as for timber and firewood sales, with the public being encouraged to use the area for camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, viewing, photography, dog sled racing and so forth.

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
Senator H. Pappv Moss, Chairman

NOTES ON THE DELTA JUNCTION BISON RANGE

February, 1984

"DON'T FENCE ME IN"

While there is almost unanimous agreement that the development of the Delta Junction Bison Range is a good idea, the issue of whether, and where, to put up a bison barrier is the subject of much debate.

Opposition to placing the barrier along the northern boundary of the bison range is strongly felt by area sportsmen, who view that placement as the first step to fencing in the now free-roaming bison. It is important to consider several factors regarding placement of the bison barrier, including the fact that the barrier's main function is as a training device, rather than a physical barrier. It is designed to deflect the movement of the bison back into the Bison Range, not to contain them.

Placement of the bison barrier along the northern edge of the Delta Junction Bison Range is proposed for the following reasons:

1. Improved Alaska Highway safety for highway travelers and reduced roadkills of bison.
2. Reduction of bison trespass onto private property of residents living on the south side of the Highway.
3. The proposed Alaska Railroad extension is planned south of the highway, and the barrier should be south of the planned extension for the safety of the bison herd as well as the rail operations.



Introduced: 1/9/84  
Referred: Resources and  
Finance

1 IN THE SENATE

BY MOSS

2

SENATE BILL NO. 337

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5

A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to the Delta Junction bison range;

7

and providing for an effective date."

8

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9

\* Section 1. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS. The legislature finds that

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28 Sec. 16.20.313. BISON RANGE TIMBER SALES. The Department of  
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2 not delay implementation of the game management plan required under  
3 AS 16.20.310.

4 \* Sec. 3. AS 16.20.300, 16.20.310, 16.20.311, 16.20.312, 16.20.313, and  
5 16.20.320 are repealed.

6 \* Sec. 4. Section 3, ch. 39, SLA 1979 and sec. 1, ch. 73, SLA 1980 are  
7 repealed.

8 \* Sec. 5. Sections 1, 2 and 4 of this Act take effect July 1, 1984.

9 \* Sec. 6. Section 3 of this Act takes effect August 1, 1995.

STATE OF ALASKA 1984 LEGISLATIVE SESSION  
FISCAL NOTE

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FISCAL DETAIL  
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Program Category Affected: Forestry  
Presuppression/Northcentral small timber  
BRU, Program or Subprogram(s) Affected: sales  
Forest Management

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SB 338 appropriates \$60,000 from the general fund to DNR for administration of the timber sale and fire suppression on the Delta bison range.

ANALYSIS: Attach a separate page for analysis

Prepared By: Sharon L. Barton Phone: 465-2400  
Division: Commissioner's Office Date: 2-13-84  
Approved by Commissioner: Wm. J. Arnold Deputy Date: 2-13-84  
Agency: Dept. of Natural Resources

Distribution (by Agency preparing fiscal note):

Legislative Finance  
Legislative Sponsor  
Requestor  
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12/1/83

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100 PERSONAL SERVICES						
200 TRAVEL						
300 CONTRACTUAL						
400 SUPPLIES						
500 EQUIPMENT						
600 LAND & STRUCTURES						
700 GRANTS, CLAIMS						
800 MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE						

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

SOURCE OF FUNDS TO OFFSET FISCAL IMPACT OF BILL:

SB 338 appropriates \$60,000 from the general fund to DNR for administration of the timber sale and fire suppression on the Delta bison range.

ANALYSIS: Attach a separate page for analysis

Prepared By: Sharon L. Barton Phone: 465-2400  
Division: Commissioner's Office Date: 2-13-84  
Approved by Commissioner: Wm. D. Arnold Deputy Date: 2-13-84  
Agency: Dept. of Natural Resources

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12/1/83