

#### Yellowstone bison petitions update:

- November 13, 2014, Western Watersheds Project and Buffalo Field Campaign petitioned for a rule to list the Yellowstone Bison DPS of plains bison (*Bison bison*) as a threatened or endangered species under the Act.
- Summarized major claims in the November petition: The Yellowstone bison are the only plains bison population free from introgression with cattle-genes. The extirpation of the Yellowstone bison would represent the complete loss of wild plains bison as a genetically-intact species, the loss of bison from the last stronghold of their historic and ecological range, the loss of unique ecological adaptations to the local environment, and the loss of valuable and unique genetic qualities. Regulatory mechanisms are inadequate to protect the Yellowstone bison. Because the Yellowstone bison are an isolated remnant population, they are susceptible to threats such as disease outbreaks, natural catastrophes, and impairment of genetic and population structure due to ongoing management activities. These management actions do not protect bison from disease, limit bison access to essential range, result in the death or removal of many animals with differential effects on subpopulations, and are a threat to Yellowstone bison conservation.
- March 2nd, 2015, James A. Horsley petitioned that we list the wild herds of bison (*Bison bison*) in Yellowstone National Park as threatened or endangered under the Act, and to designate critical habitat.
- Summarized major claims in the March petition: The Yellowstone bison are the last remaining, non-extirpated bison in the United States and are unique in that they have inhabited continuously the Yellowstone region since prehistoric times. The present Interagency Bison Management Plan that manages this herd is in practice a government bison extermination program operating primarily in behalf of the Montana Department of Livestock. Listing is necessary to promote the necessary protection for this unique wild bison remnant that presently is being driven into extinction by the governmental agencies comprising the IBMP.
- Initial review of both petitions does not indicate that emergency listing is warranted and we have sent petition response letters to the petitioners acknowledging receipt of the petitions and informing them of our decision on emergency listing.
- Our plan is for Region 6 address both petitions using the new petition evaluation form and publishing our finding in a batched 90-day finding (a notice covering several species) that will be published in Federal Register in the fall of 2015.