

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7954

To assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 17, 2026

Mr. HURD of Colorado (for himself, Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ, Mrs. FEDORCHAK, and Mr. NEWHOUSE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Indian land.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Don Young Doug
5 LaMalfa Indian Buffalo Management Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

8 (1) buffalo sustained a majority of Indian
9 Tribes in North America for many centuries before

1 buffalo were nearly exterminated by non-Indian
2 hunters in the mid-1800s;

3 (2) the historical, cultural, and spiritual connec-
4 tion between buffalo and Indian Tribes has not di-
5 minished over time;

6 (3) Indian Tribes have long desired the reestab-
7 lishment of buffalo throughout Indian country for
8 cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes; and

9 (4) the successful restoration of buffalo would
10 allow an Indian Tribe to benefit from—

11 (A) the reintroduction of buffalo into the
12 diets of the members of the Indian Tribe;

13 (B) the rekindling of the spiritual and cul-
14 tural relationship between buffalo and the In-
15 dian Tribe; and

16 (C) the use of buffalo for economic devel-
17 opment, in the case of an Indian Tribe that
18 chooses to use buffalo for economic develop-
19 ment.

20 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

21 (1) fulfill the government-to-government rela-
22 tionship between Tribal Governments and the
23 United States in the management of buffalo and
24 buffalo habitat;

1 (2) promote and develop the capacity of Indian
2 Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo
3 and buffalo habitat;

4 (3) protect, conserve, and enhance buffalo,
5 which are important to the subsistence, culture, and
6 economic development of many Indian Tribes;

7 (4) promote the development and use of buffalo
8 and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable
9 benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations,
10 through management of buffalo and buffalo habitats
11 in accordance with integrated resource management
12 plans developed by Indian Tribes and Tribal organi-
13 zations;

14 (5) develop buffalo herds and increase produc-
15 tion of buffalo in order to meet Tribal subsistence,
16 health, cultural, and economic development needs;
17 and

18 (6) promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and
19 Tribal organizations in Department of the Interior,
20 local, regional, national, or international—

21 (A) decision-making processes; and

22 (B) forums.

23 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

24 In this Act:

1 (1) BUFFALO.—The term “buffalo” means an
2 animal of the subspecies *Bison bison bison*.

3 (2) BUFFALO HABITAT.—The term “buffalo
4 habitat” means Indian land that is managed for buf-
5 falo.

6 (3) DEPARTMENT.—The term “Department”
7 means the Department of the Interior.

8 (4) INDIAN LAND.—The term “Indian land”
9 has the meaning given the term in paragraph (2) of
10 section 2601 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (25
11 U.S.C. 3501), except that, in that paragraph, the
12 term “Indian reservation” shall be considered to
13 have the meaning given the term “Indian reserva-
14 tion” in paragraph (3) of that section, without re-
15 gard to the date specified in paragraph (3) of that
16 section.

17 (5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
18 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
19 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
20 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

21 (6) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
22 the Secretary of the Interior.

23 (7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Tribal
24 organization” means any legally established organi-
25 zation of Indians that—

1 (A)(i) is chartered under section 17 of the
2 Act of June 18, 1934 (commonly known as the
3 “Indian Reorganization Act”; 25 U.S.C. 5124),
4 and recognized by the governing body of one or
5 more Indian Tribes; or

6 (ii) is a Tribal corporation federally char-
7 tered under section 3 of the Oklahoma Indian
8 Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. 5203); and

9 (B) has demonstrable experience in the
10 restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on In-
11 dian land.

12 **SEC. 4. BUFFALO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.**

13 (a) DIRECTION FOR COORDINATION.—The Secretary
14 is directed to work with Indian Tribes and Tribal organi-
15 zations to—

16 (1) promote and develop the capacity of Indian
17 Tribes and Tribal organizations to manage buffalo
18 and buffalo habitat;

19 (2) promote the ability of Indian Tribes and
20 Tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and en-
21 hance populations of buffalo that are owned by In-
22 dian Tribes or Tribal organizations;

23 (3) promote the development and use of buffalo
24 and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable

1 benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations;
2 and

3 (4) promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and
4 Tribal organizations in Department, international,
5 national, regional, and local decision making and fo-
6 rums regarding buffalo and buffalo habitat.

7 (b) CONTRACTS AND GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter
9 into contracts and cooperative agreements with, and
10 award grants to, Indian Tribes and Tribal organiza-
11 tions to enable the Indian Tribes and Tribal organi-
12 zations to—

13 (A) plan, conduct, or implement a buffalo
14 restoration or management program;

15 (B) plan and execute commercial activities
16 related to buffalo or buffalo products;

17 (C) support the use and deployment of mo-
18 bile Tribal or Tribal organization meat proc-
19 essing facilities; or

20 (D) carry out other activities relating to
21 buffalo restoration and management.

22 (2) NO DIMINISHMENT OF LAWS AND REGULA-
23 TIONS.—Nothing in this subsection diminishes any
24 Federal or State law (including regulations) regard-

1 ing diseased buffalo or buffalo that escape from In-
2 dian land.

3 (c) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall
4 provide technical assistance to an Indian Tribe or Tribal
5 organization that enters into a contract or cooperative
6 agreement or receives a grant under this section to assist
7 the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization in—

8 (1) carrying out the activities of a buffalo or
9 buffalo habitat restoration or management program;
10 and

11 (2) implementing the activities described in sub-
12 paragraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(1).

13 **SEC. 5. CONSULTATION; COORDINATION.**

14 (a) CONSULTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the
15 date of enactment of this Act, and on an ongoing basis
16 thereafter, the Secretary shall consult with Indian Tribes
17 and Tribal organizations on initiatives of the Department
18 that affect buffalo or buffalo habitat, including efforts of
19 the Department to contain or eradicate diseased buffalo.

20 (b) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall develop a
21 policy relating to buffalo and buffalo habitat management
22 activities on Indian land, in accordance with—

23 (1) the goals and objectives described in buffalo
24 management programs approved by Indian Tribes;
25 and

1 (2) Tribal laws and ordinances.

2 **SEC. 6. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.**

3 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Sec-
4 retary shall not disclose or cause to be disclosed any infor-
5 mation provided to the Secretary by an Indian Tribe or
6 Tribal organization that is identified by the Indian Tribe
7 or Tribal organization as culturally sensitive, proprietary,
8 or otherwise confidential.

9 **SEC. 7. BUFFALO FROM FEDERAL LAND.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into an
11 agreement with an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization to
12 dispose of surplus buffalo on Federal land administered
13 by the Department, as applicable, by transporting such
14 buffalo onto Indian land.

15 (b) APPLICATION.—An Indian Tribe or Tribal orga-
16 nization may submit to the Secretary an application to re-
17 ceive buffalo described in subsection (a) at such time, in
18 such manner, and containing such information as the Sec-
19 retary may require.

20 (c) WAIVER OF CHARGES.—The Secretary may waive
21 any charges for the buffalo described in subsection (a),
22 including any deposit or payment for services as described
23 in section 10.2 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations
24 (or any successor regulation).

1 **SEC. 8. TREATY RIGHTS RETAINED.**

2 Nothing in this Act alters, modifies, diminishes, or
3 extinguishes the treaty rights of any Indian Tribe.

4 **SEC. 9. SUNSET.**

5 The authority provided by this Act ceases to be effec-
6 tive 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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