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H. R. 7954

[Report No. 119–]

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

NOVEMBER --, 2026

Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

A BILL

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Don Young Doug LaMalfa Indian Buffalo Management Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

(1) buffalo sustained a majority of Indian Tribes in North America for many centuries before buffalo were nearly exterminated by non-Indian hunters in the mid-1800s;

(2) the historical, cultural, and spiritual connection between buffalo and Indian Tribes has not diminished over time;

(3) Indian Tribes have long desired the reestablishment of buffalo throughout Indian country for cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes; and

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

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

(B) the rekindling of the spiritual and cultural relationship between buffalo and the Indian Tribe; and

(C) the use of buffalo for economic development, in the case of an Indian Tribe that chooses to use buffalo for economic development.

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

(1) fulfill the government-to-government relationship between Tribal Governments and the United States in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat;

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

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

(4) promote the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, through management of buffalo and buffalo habitats in accordance with integrated resource management plans developed by Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations;

(5) develop buffalo herds and increase production of buffalo in order to meet Tribal subsistence,

health, cultural, and economic development needs; and

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

(A) decision-making processes; and

(B) forums.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) BUFFALO.—The term ''buffalo'' means an animal of the subspecies Bison bison bison.

(2) BUFFALO HABITAT.—The term ''buffalo habitat'' means Indian land that is managed for buffalo.

(3) DEPARTMENT.—The term ''Department'' means the Department of the Interior.

(4) INDIAN LAND.—The term ''Indian land'' has the meaning given the term in paragraph (2) of section 2601 of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 (25 U.S.C. 3501), except that, in that paragraph, the term ''Indian reservation'' shall be considered to have the meaning given the term ''Indian reservation'' in paragraph (3) of that section, without regard to the date specified in paragraph (3) of that section.

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

(6) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

(7) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term ''Tribal organization'' means any legally established organization of Indians that—

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

(ii) is a Tribal corporation federally chartered under section 3 of the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. 5203); and

(B) has demonstrable experience in the restoration of buffalo and buffalo habitat on Indian land.

SEC. 4. BUFFALO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

(a) DIRECTION FOR COORDINATION.—The Secretary is directed to work with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to—

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

(2) promote the ability of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and enhance populations of buffalo that are owned by Indian Tribes or Tribal organizations;

(3) promote the development and use of buffalo and buffalo habitat for the maximum practicable benefit of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations; and

(4) promote the inclusion of Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations in Department, international, national, regional, and local decision making and forums regarding buffalo and buffalo habitat.

(b) CONTRACTS AND GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with, and award grants to, Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to enable the Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations to—

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

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

(C) support the use and deployment of mobile Tribal or Tribal organization meat processing facilities; or

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

(2) NO DIMINISHMENT OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS.—Nothing in this subsection diminishes any Federal or State law (including regulations) regarding diseased buffalo or buffalo that escape from Indian land.

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

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

(2) implementing the activities described in subparagraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(1).

SEC. 5. CONSULTATION; COORDINATION.

(a) CONSULTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and on an ongoing basis thereafter, the Secretary shall consult with Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations on initiatives of the Department

that affect buffalo or buffalo habitat, including efforts of the Department to contain or eradicate diseased buffalo.

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

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

(2) Tribal laws and ordinances.

SEC. 6. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary shall not disclose or cause to be disclosed any information provided to the Secretary by an Indian Tribe or Tribal organization that is identified by the Indian Tribe or Tribal organization as culturally sensitive, proprietary, or otherwise confidential.

SEC. 7. BUFFALO FROM FEDERAL LAND.

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

(b) APPLICATION.—An Indian Tribe or Tribal organization may submit to the Secretary an application to receive buffalo described in subsection (a) at such time, in

such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

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

SEC. 8. TREATY RIGHTS RETAINED.

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

SEC. 9. SUNSET.

The authority provided by this Act ceases to be effective 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.