



# Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council

711 Central Avenue, Suite 220, Billings, Montana 59102

Ph: (406) 252-2550

Fax: (406) 254-6355

May 31, 2019

Virginia Kelly, Team Leader  
Forest Plan Revision  
Custer Gallatin National Forest  
P.O. Box 130  
Bozeman, Mt. 59771

Re: CGNF Forest Plan Revision-Species of Conservation Concern

Dear Ms. Kelly,

On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, Cottonwood Environmental Law Center requests that you add the American Buffalo to the list of Species of Conservation Concern for the Custer Gallatin Forest Plan Revision. The Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council’s mission is to “preserve our homelands, defend rights of the Indian Treaties with the United States, speak in a unified voice, offer support to our people, and to otherwise promote the common welfare of all of the Indian Peoples of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. We represent the following:

- Blackfeet Tribe
- Chippewa Cree Tribe of Rocky Boy
- Fort Belknap Indian Community
- Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- Crow Tribe
- Little Shell Tribe of Montana
- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- Eastern Shoshone Tribal Council
- Northern Arapaho Tribal Council
- Shoshone Bannock Tribes of Ft. Hall
- Piikani Nation

According to the attached Forest Service document:

A “Species of Conservation Concern” is a species, other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area (the Custer Gallatin Forest lands) for which the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long term in the plan area.

The Species of Conservation Concern document also states that “[s]pecies identified by Federal, State, or Tribal entities as high priority for conservation” will be considered for the list.

The American Buffalo is considered a species of high priority for conservation by the Tribes represented by the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council. For centuries the American buffalo has been closely tied to the survival, identities, tradition, culture, spiritual beliefs, and religious practices of the our Tribes and indigenous ways of life. The Forest Service lands surrounding



Yellowstone National Park comprise high-quality native buffalo habitat and our Tribal lands are located directly adjacent to Forest Service land managed by the Custer Gallatin National Forest that is historic buffalo habitat.

Our Tribes traditionally hunted buffalo on CGNF lands adjacent to its reservation and Yellowstone National Park. Treaty Rights held by our Tribes allow tribal members to continue hunting buffalo in these areas. We ask that the Forest Service add the American Buffalo to the list of Species of Conservation Concern to ensure the Tribes' Treaty Rights are respected.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Please contact John Meyer with Cottonwood Environmental Law Center at 406.546.0149 should you have any questions regarding the contents of this correspondence.

Sincerely,

Gerald Gray, Chairman  
Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council

Cc: Tribal Leaders  
File

