

H.R. _____, the Grand Canyon Bison Management Act

Support Sportsmen and Conservation Efforts to Manage Arizona Bison on the Grand Canyon National Park

Cosponsors: Trent Franks, Tom O'Halleran, David Schweikert

Dear Colleague,

We invite you to support the Grand Canyon Bison Management Act.

The Grand Canyon National Park has a bison problem that has exacerbated over the last few years as the National Park Service (NPS) has assessed and evaluated the problem to an exhausting degree, all the while a common sense solution has been ignored.

Through the Grand Canyon Bison Management Act, the National Park Service is directed to collaborate with the Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) to not only manage a reduction in the number of bison but also bring relief to the Park's beleaguered resources at the same time. With federal regulations in place restricting citizen hunters from helping reduce the herd size, the bison population has risen from approximately 200 animals to projections now reaching nearly 600 head. Absent a proactive effort by the AZGFD and volunteer citizen hunters, this herd could grow exponentially to the further detriment of the Park. The animals are [over-grazing native grasses, polluting water sources, trampling archeological sites and posing a safety risk to visitors using Park roads and trails.](#)

While the NPS recognizes the risks posed by this population and has a desire to reduce the herd to a manageable level, they have been mired in "analysis paralysis" over the matter since at least 2014. Now three years later, they have released a proposed plan through an Environmental Assessment that ignores the fact the state of Arizona owns these bison, and fails to give deference to the AZGFD who have managed the herd since 1929.

Their proposed alternative ignores a common sense, bureaucracy reducing, taxpayer saving, financially prudent solution to too many bison and too much degradation of habitat in the Grand Canyon National Park. The NPS plan does not take advantage of, nor utilize the expertise of the AZGFD to manage this herd. It also ignores the opportunity such a partnership facilitates to reduce the herd to manageable levels with citizen hunters willing to pay for the chance to hunt them!

After much Congressional prodding, the proposal went part way in placating citizen hunters, allowing them to become "skilled" and if selected, a chance to cull an animal, but only with the ability to retain the meat, not the entire animal. The NPS approach, among the other tools proposed, are all predicated on Federal funding, ie; more tax dollars. While that plays out, the bison continue to multiply and the Park resources deteriorate.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation should guide the management of these state owned animals. The AZGFD should manage public hunting opportunities for all citizens, in concert with the NPS, not unlike what takes place in Wyoming with their Game and Fish Department and the management of elk on the Grand Teton National Park.

My bill, The Grand Canyon Bison Management Act, addresses not only the immediate population problems, but also provides for a long-term Management Plan to reduce bison numbers at Grand Canyon National Park. By authorizing the immediate use of lethal and non-lethal methods – including the use of skilled citizen hunters under the auspices of the AZGFD – this bill will immediately allow for the reduction of the bison herd, ensure its long-term sustainability and provide Grand Canyon National Park resources a respite from degradation and a chance to rejuvenate and heal.

A coordinated effort with the AZGFD and the NPS will save taxpayer dollars and allow citizen hunters to participate in a fair and humane hunt. Successful citizen hunters will be allowed to retain the entire animal in an ethical way governed by AZGFD rules and regulations, again in concert with the NPS.

Better yet, this bill takes immediate steps to solve this growing problem at no federal cost.

The Grand Canyon is a national treasure worth protecting. The Grand Canyon Bison Management Act will help NPS preserve the park and wildlife diversity for future generations to enjoy. I encourage you to support this good-governance bill as a cosponsor.

For more information or to support this legislation, please contact Trevor Pearson at 202-225-2315 or at Trevor.Pearson@mail.house.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress