

## **Briefing Statement**

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**Bureau:** National Park Service  
**Issue:** Meeting with Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes of Ft. Peck Executive Council  
**Park Site:** Yellowstone National Park  
**Date:** January 30, 2019

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### **Key Points:**

- On December 18, 2018, Yellowstone (YELL) Superintendent, Cam Sholly and park staff met with the Ft. Peck Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribe Executive Council at Tribal headquarters in Poplar, MT.
- The meeting served to introduce the new YELL Superintendent to key tribal leaders, program managers and bison management staff, including Tribal Chairman, Floyd Azure.
- The Superintendent and park staff toured the Ft. Peck bison quarantine facility with the tribal bison manager.
- The evening of December 18, 2018 the Superintendent and park staff met with counsel for the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) and Ft. Peck tribes to discuss and encourage the potential transfer of five bull bison from the APHIS Corwin Springs quarantine facility to the Ft. Peck facility for a year of assurance testing (Phase 3).
- The Tribal Council and Chairman were reluctant to sign the MOU for the transfer of the five bull bison due to terms and condition prescribed by APHIS, fearful that agreeing to assurance testing (Phase 3) would tacitly prevent Ft. Peck from becoming an approved quarantine (Phase 2) facility in the future.

### **Background:**

- During December 2017, the NPS, APHIS and State of Montana developed and signed an agreement in principle to facilitate the movement and future release of YELL bison to tribal lands.
- During summer 2018, the NPS, APHIS and State of Montana signed an MOU outlining the roles, responsibilities and principles for operation and oversight of the YELL Stephens Creek bison quarantine facility.
- In February, 2018, APHIS Deputy Administrator Shere advised Secretary Zinke and his staff that male YELL bison captured in February/March 2018 could be shipped to the Ft. Peck Reservation by the end of 2018. Representatives from Montana and the Fort Peck tribes attended this meeting.
- On July 2, 2018, Dr. Shere informed Superintendent Wenk that Phase II must now occur at YELL before the bison can be transferred to the Fort Peck Reservation, based on a risk assessment conducted by APHIS staff. This change means male bison currently held at Stephens Creek will likely not be transferred to the Fort Peck tribes until about November 2019.

### **Current Status:**

- On December 21, 2018, the Tribal Council of the Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes of Ft. Peck approved the MOU for transfer of the five bull bison from the APHIS facility at Corwin Springs to Ft. Peck for assurance testing (Phase 3).
- 58 male/21 female bison are currently being held undergoing serial testing (Phase 1) at the YELL Stephens Creek facility, with the intent to transfer to Ft. Peck upon completion of quarantine (Phase 2).
- The commitment to transfer these held bison to Ft. Peck was reaffirmed by the Superintendent at the December 18, 2018, meeting in Poplar, MT.

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