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The self-serving narrative of the American bison as a "conservation success story" hides an historical truth that remains true a century after their near extermination by Euro-Americans: the wildlife species is endangered in North America.

A primary threat is found in the State codes. The threat to recovering the imperiled wildlife species is complicated by the U.S. government's feeble response to make habitat on public lands available for American bison to freely roam.

The American bison in Yellowstone have the unique distinction of migrating across three States.

So how does Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming view natural migration of an indigenous species?

An inspection of State codes reveal the absence of any provision for conserving American bison in the wild -- with agriculture and livestock agencies in charge of removing them.

I have seen U.S. Dept. of Agriculture officials assist the state of Idaho in the "eradication" of American bison that cross Targhee Pass on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest into the geothermal basin of Henry's Lake and Island Park. "Eradication" is the law. Idaho Code § 25-618(1).

Bison migrating along the Shoshone River into the State of Wyoming are managed in restricted ranges in limited numbers for removal on the Shoshone National Forest. With a phone call, the Wyoming Livestock Board can order Game & Fish to remove migratory bison found in the state. Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 23-1-302(a)(xxvii); Wyo. Game & Fish Dept. 2008.

In Montana, bison migrating along the Yellowstone and Madison rivers are managed in restricted ranges in limited numbers for removal on the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Under Mont. Code Ann. § 81-2-120, the state veterinarian and the livestock department are firmly in control of the wild species under the Governor-approved plan the statute calls for: the outdated Interagency Bison Management Plan.

It is you and I who pay for the enforcement of Montana's code.

A pipeline of taxpayer money has been flowing from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service to the Montana Dept. of Livestock since shortly after the agency seized management control of American bison in 1995.

While the state veterinarian tries to hide the appropriated amounts in a mishmash of subsidized programs, the livestock department has blown through \$12,000,000 of American taxpayer money to enforce § 81-2-120.

National Forests in three Regions have abandoned American bison to State regulatory schemes written by the livestock industry. These three Regions hold 87,000,000 acres of National Forest habitat in public trust for future generations.

The unique distinction of American bison migrating across Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming is met with laws calling for their "eradication" and removal.

The Custer Gallatin National Forest and Region 1 must not abandon American bison to another regulatory scheme that does not sustain them on habitat held in public trust.

An ancient remnant and singular population of American bison occupying their native range in the wild is all that remains in the conterminous 48 States. This is not a "conservation success story."

Let us put our minds and hearts together and write a new chapter for American bison on the Custer Gallatin National Forest.