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November 16, 2012

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Director Dan Ashe
Director
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C St, Nw
Washington, D.C. 20240-1000

Re: Alaska Wood Bison Reintroduction

Dear Director Ashe,

I write today regarding the long overdue planned reintroduction of wood bison into the Alaska wilderness. This process has been going on since the early 1990's. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game had planned to release the herd into the wild in 2010. Now, we sit less than two months away from 2013 and the herd is still in captivity at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center.

The fact that the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service still haven't been able to agree on a management provisions for a "nonessential experimental population" designation under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act for the wood bison herd has now gone beyond simply frustration.

This delay has gone on so long that the state is now being forced to cull the captive herd to keep the number of animals at a level that their pasture can support. There is also the matter of the \$200,000 annually it costs to manage the herd in captivity. I don't believe the state of Alaska should be forced to come up with the money to manage a herd they wanted to release into the wild years ago.

While I understand these agreements take time – and in fact will take even more time for public comment when and if an agreement is reached on the rule – I do not accept that continuous delay is reasonable. To date, every time I have inquired about the ongoing process, USFWS has led me to believe a deal was close. That is no longer good enough.

I would like a prompt and clear answer to two questions:

1. What is the precise timeline for an agreement being reached on the 10(j) rule?
2. Is USFWS prepared to reimburse the state of Alaska for the cost of managing the herd (\$200,000 annually) in captivity for the duration of this delay?

We are well past the point when anything but specifics is acceptable to the first question, and if the answer to the second question is "no" then the USFWS needs to get this agreement done as soon as possible. While I'm aware of USFWS's one-time payment, forcing the state of Alaska to

spend money to manage a herd of wood bison in captivity, a herd they had hoped to release into the wild years ago, is not acceptable.

It is past time to finish this process. All sides involved want the same thing, and that is to reintroduce a species to the Alaskan wild that hasn't been there since the 1800s. I hope the USFWS is ready to firmly commit to a timeline where that goal is finally accomplished. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski", with a large, stylized initial "L" and a long, sweeping underline.

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator