



**MONTANA
FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION**

502 S. 19th Ave. Ste 104
Bozeman, MT 59718

January 3, 2014

State-Tribal Relations Committee
Legislative Services Division
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the State-Tribal Relations Committee:

I hope this letter finds you all enjoying a very Happy New Year. I also hope that you have a great meeting and appreciate the opportunity to send a letter in my absence from the meeting. Most of the Montana Farm Bureau staff will be attending the American Farm Bureau Annual Convention during your meeting. Mr. Casey Barrs informed me that you were interested in hearing about Montana Farm Bureau's involvement in the Park County Stockgrowers vs. State of Montana lawsuit with regard to bison in the Gardiner Basin.

The MFBF originally joined this lawsuit against the State of Montana, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Board of Livestock for what our members believed was mismanagement of bison outside the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park. After the district court ruled against Montana Farm Bureau and Park County, we (MFBF) proceeded to work on a settlement with the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The settlement would have been a Memorandum of Understanding between MFBF, Park County and the State of Montana outlining that we would maintain an open discussion on protecting Montana's livestock industry from brucellosis, work towards balancing the protection of private property, public health, livestock and recreational interests when bison leave the Park, and expressed both sides' desire to avoid future litigation, whenever possible. However, because Park County did not wish to settle the case, but instead chose to move forward with an appeal, we were unable to ultimately settle with the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as they desired to settle only if all parties did so.

MFBF opted out of appealing the case because we feel the new Administration is more open to working with the agriculture and livestock community on the Park bison migration issue, which we very much appreciate. By not moving forward with an appeal, we hope to keep the lines of communication open between the agriculture industry and the State of Montana to assure the livestock industry is protected. We hope that we will be able to work toward an agreement in ways other than litigation.

Sincerely,
Nicole Rolf
Eastern Montana Regional Manager and Deputy Director for Legislative Affairs