

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

ENGROSSED

*This Version Includes All Amendments Adopted
on Second Reading in the House of Introduction*

LLS NO. 25-0204.01 Jery Payne x2157

SENATE BILL 25-053

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Danielson,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Joseph and Velasco, Duran

Senate Committees

Agriculture & Natural Resources
Appropriations

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF BISON AS WILDLIFE UNLESS**
102 **CLASSIFIED AS LIVESTOCK, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,**
103 **MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)

American Indian Affairs Interim Study Committee. The bill classifies bison as big game wildlife unless the bison are livestock. Classifying bison as wildlife means that hunting or taking one is illegal unless authorized by rule of the parks and wildlife commission.

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.*

SENATE
Amended 2nd Reading
April 15, 2025

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) The history of the American bison is deeply intertwined with
5 the history of indigenous peoples in North America. Once roaming the
6 continent in vast herds numbering in the tens of millions, bison are a
7 cornerstone of life for many American Indians and are revered as sacred
8 relatives. Many American Indians and Tribal Nations continue to rely
9 upon bison for survival, including for food, shelter, and clothing.

10 (b) Among many tribal nations, the buffalo is regarded as a sacred
11 relative. This relationship is deeply embedded in ceremonial traditions,
12 including the Sundance, the Buffalo Ceremony, and the White-Buffalo
13 Calf-Woman teachings. These ceremonies are not simply historical relics
14 but are actively practiced today, reinforcing the spiritual, cultural, and
15 communal well-being of native people. Additionally, many other tribes
16 have traditional buffalo dances and other sacred rites honoring the
17 buffalo's spiritual role. These ceremonies are vital to the continuation of
18 traditional ways of life and connection to the natural world.

19 (c) Recognizing the bison's critical role in the livelihood of
20 indigenous peoples and in the campaign to continue European claim and
21 control over lands inhabited by indigenous peoples, the United States
22 government implemented a scorched-earth policy, granting military
23 commanders the authority to decimate bison populations;

24 (d) Over a span of 40 years, more than 30 million bison were
25 killed. This mass extermination was not only wasteful and inhumane but
26 also a calculated effort to undermine the cultural and physical survival of

1 indigenous peoples.

2 (e) Colonel Richard Irving Dodge infamously declared, "Kill
3 every buffalo you can! Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone." The policy
4 of killing bison had devastating impacts on American Indians and Tribal
5 Nations and played a significant role in the federal government' s efforts
6 to destroy tribal sovereignty. The resulting food and cultural scarcity
7 played a significant role in the forced relocation of the plains peoples
8 from Colorado in the late 1860s. It also contributed to the pressures
9 restricting the Ute people to western Colorado.

10 (f) By the time Colorado achieved statehood in 1876, hunting and
11 habitat destruction caused by the development of farms, cities, and
12 railroads had reduced the bison population to only a few hundred south
13 of the Platte river;

14 (g) Colorado seeks to protect, serve, and honor the enduring bond
15 between bison and American Indians and Tribal Nations by classifying
16 certain bison as wildlife; and

17 (h) This action represents a step toward making amends for the
18 attempted genocide of American Indians through the eradication of their
19 food source, the bison.

20 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-1-102, **amend** (2)
21 and (51); and **add** (2.6) as follows:

22 **33-1-102. Definitions - rules.** As used in this title 33, unless the
23 context otherwise requires:

24 (2) "Big game" means elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose,
25 rocky mountain bighorn sheep, desert bighorn sheep, rocky mountain
26 goat, pronghorn antelope, black bear, mountain lion, BISON THAT ARE
27 WILDLIFE, and all species of large mammals that may be introduced or

1 transplanted into this state for hunting or are classified as big game by the
2 commission.

3 (2.6) "BISON" MEANS THE UNGULATE CLASSIFIED AS THE SPECIES
4 BOS BISON OR BISON BISON, KNOWN AS THE AMERICAN BISON.

5
6 (51) (a) "Wildlife" means wild vertebrates, mollusks, and
7 crustaceans, whether alive or dead, including any part, product, egg, or
8 offspring thereof, that exist as a species in a natural wild state in their
9 place of origin, presently or historically, except those species determined
10 to be domestic animals by rule or regulation by OF the commission and
11 the state agricultural commission. Such determination within this statute
12 shall not affect other statutes or court decisions determining injury to
13 persons or damage to property which THAT depend on the classification
14 of animals by such statute or court decision as wild or domestic animals.

15 (b) "WILDLIFE" DOES NOT INCLUDE:

16 (I) PRIVATELY OWNED CATTLE, INCLUDING PRIVATELY OWNED
17 BISON, BISON LEGALLY REDUCED TO CAPTIVITY, OR BISON THAT HAVE
18 ESCAPED LAWFUL CAPTIVITY; OR

19 (II) BISON OWNED BY OR LAWFULLY REDUCED TO CAPTIVITY BY AN
20 INDIAN TRIBE.

21 SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-4-102, add
22 (1.4)(cc) as follows:

23 33-4-102. Types of licenses and fees - rules. (1.4) Except as
24 otherwise provided in subsections (1.5) and (1.6) of this section, the
25 division may issue the following resident and nonresident licenses and
26 shall collect the following fees:

27 = Fees

	<u>Resident</u>	<u>Nonresident</u>
2	<u>(cc) BISON</u>	<u>374.22</u> <u>2,756.74</u>

3 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-6-109, **amend**
4 **(3)(b) and (3.4)(a)(VII); and add (3.4)(a)(VIII) as follows:**

5 **33-6-109. Wildlife - illegal possession.** (3) A person ~~who~~ THAT
6 violates subsection (1) or (2) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor
7 and, depending upon the wildlife involved, shall be punished upon
8 conviction by a fine or imprisonment, or both, and license suspension
9 points or suspension or revocation of license privileges as follows:

10 (b) For each BISON, bald eagle, golden eagle, rocky mountain goat,
11 desert bighorn sheep, American peregrine falcon, or rocky mountain
12 bighorn sheep, a fine of not less than one thousand dollars and not more
13 than one hundred thousand dollars, or by imprisonment for not more than
14 one year in the county jail, or both such fine and such imprisonment, and
15 an assessment of twenty points. Upon conviction, the commission may
16 suspend any or all license privileges of the person for a period of one year
17 to life. A person ~~who~~ THAT possesses all or a part of a bald eagle or
18 golden eagle shall not be in violation of this section if the possession is
19 authorized by 50 CFR 22.

20 (3.4) (a) In addition to the criminal penalties listed in subsection
21 (3) of this section, there may be assessed a further penalty in the
22 following amount for each of the following big game animals illegally
23 taken:

24 (VII) For each pronghorn antelope with a horn length of at least
25 fourteen inches, four thousand dollars; OR

26 (VIII) FOR EACH BISON, TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS.

27 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-6-110, **amend (1)**

1 introductory portion and (1)(a) as follows:

2 **33-6-110. Division action to recover possession and value of**
3 **wildlife unlawfully taken.** (1) The division may bring and maintain a
4 civil action against any person, in the name of the people of the state, to
5 recover possession or value or both possession and value of any wildlife
6 taken in violation of articles 1 to 6 of this title TITLE 33. A writ of replevin
7 may issue in such an action without bond. No previous demand for
8 possession shall be necessary. If costs or damages are adjudged in favor
9 of the defendant, the same shall be paid out of the wildlife cash fund
10 CREATED IN SECTION 33-1-112. Neither the pendency of such civil action
11 nor a criminal prosecution for the same taking shall be a bar to the other;
12 nor shall anything in this section affect the right of seizure under other
13 provisions of articles 1 to 6 of this title TITLE 33. The following shall be
14 considered the minimum value of the wildlife unlawfully taken or
15 possessed and may be recovered in addition to recovery of possession of
16 the wildlife:

17 (a) For each BISON, eagle, member of an endangered species,
18 rocky mountain goat, moose, rocky mountain bighorn
19 sheep, or lynx\$ 1,000

20 **SECTION 6. Appropriation.** For the 2025-26 state fiscal year,
21 \$75,000 is appropriated to the department of natural resources for use by
22 the division of parks and wildlife. This appropriation is from the wildlife
23 cash fund created in section 33-1-112 (1)(a), C.R.S. To implement this
24 act, the division may use this appropriation for wildlife operations.

25 **SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
26 takes effect January 1, 2026; except that, if a referendum petition is filed
27 pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this

1 act or an item, section, or part of this act within the ninety-day period
2 after final adjournment of the general assembly, then the act, item,
3 section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the
4 general election to be held in November 2026 and, in such case, will take
5 effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the
6 governor.