



March 19, 2025

Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 50203

Submitted electronically via

<https://www.leg.state.co.us/clics/clics2025A/commsumm.nsf/signup.xsp?h=SWT>

Re: S25-053: Support for Bison Having Dual Status in Colorado

Dear Chair Roberts and Committee:

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony supporting bison being recognized as a dual status species in Colorado and to ask, and express support, for two amendments that we are hoping will be offered and adopted in committee. These two amendments would remove unnecessary changes to existing wildlife and nongame statutory definitions that risk confusion and unnecessarily complicate an otherwise straightforward bill.¹

The Center for Biological Diversity (“Center”) is a 501(c)(3) that works to secure a future for all species, great and small, hovering on the brink of extinction. We do so through science, law, and creative media, with a focus on protecting the lands, waters and climate that species need to survive. The Center has thousands of Colorado members and supporters that want to ensure future Coloradan’s will inherit a colorful and biologically diverse Colorado.

While we are not aware of any wild resident herds in Colorado, Colorado’s failure to recognize bison as a dual status species—wildlife and livestock/conservation herds—has left wild bison vulnerable to unregulated slaughter. This is a pragmatic bill for addressing this problem. This bill would align Colorado’s treatment of bison with surrounding states so when wild bison in eastern Utah cross the invisible state line into Colorado, they would remain treated as wildlife, and not trespassing cattle that can be shot on sight and left to rot. By doing our part to provide this species’ dual status, Colorado will contribute to the preservation of some of the purest bison genes, and thus the recovery of this iconic American animal.²

As the National mammal, the gray area that bison falls within in Colorado is unacceptable. It is due time for Colorado to recognize bison as a dual status species.

¹ To the extent an amendment may change the effective date of this legislation, we support those amendments as well.

² Lindsay Whitehurst, *Secluded Utah bison have key genetic material, study shows*, The Salt Lake Tribune, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2015/12/17/secluded-utah-bison-have-key-genetic-material-study-shows/> (Dec. 17, 2015); Bison Bellows: Utah’s Book Cliffs Herd, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bison-bellows-6-30-16.htm> (last visited Mar. 19, 2025).

We anticipate amendments will be offered in committee that would address two concerns we have had with S25-053. Two amendments in particular that must be adopted are:

- Striking unnecessary changes to the definition of “nongame wildlife.” There is no reason to amend this definition as bison are proposed as a big game wildlife species.
- Striking unnecessary changes to the definition of “wildlife.” The original definition for wildlife should be kept and instead a new section 33-1-102(51.5) would be added that states: (51.5) American bison (*Bos bison*) are wildlife except for bison which are privately owned or raised or kept for profit.

We ask the committee to support recognizing bison as a dual status species and to adopt the two amendments mentioned above.

Sincerely,

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