



# CROW CREEK SIOUX TRIBE

P.O. BOX 50  
FORT THOMPSON, SOUTH DAKOTA 57339  
TEL: (605) 245-2221 – FAX: (605) 245-2470

## TRIBAL COUNCIL

March 1, 2018.

**Brandon Sazue, Sr.**  
Chairman

**Kyle Kirkie**  
Vice-Chairman

**Tina Grey Owl**  
Secretary

**Roland Hawk, Sr.**  
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**Francine Middlelent**  
Councilmember

**Jamie Fallis**  
Councilmember

**Gilbert Pickner**  
Councilmember

**ATTN: Leanne M. Marten, Regional Forester - Region 1, U.S. Forest Service.**  
**Mary C. Erickson, Forest Supervisor Custer Gallatin National Forest.**  
**Mariah Leuschen-Lonergan Custer Gallatin National Forest**  
**(Forest Plan Revision Team).**

**RE: Comment draft plan – CGNF/Yellowstone Buffalo.**

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of the Great Sioux Nation is categorized by the Department of the Interior as an “Associated Tribe of Yellowstone.” Through the 1851 and 1868 treaties of Fort Laramie, our nation, and our sister tribes in the Great Sioux Nation, retain treaty rights to the region now identified as Greater Yellowstone. Those treaties and rights are enshrined in Article VI of the US Constitution. Contemporaneously, we have reserved rights, and qualify for aboriginal title in the area, as defined and protected by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Over the previous three decades, the tribes of the Great Sioux Nation (Očhéthi Šakówiŋ) have passed multiple official resolutions and made declarations opposing the federal and state mismanagement of the buffalo in the GYE, with significant emphasis on the disturbing “management” actions undertaken when the combination of winter and their DNA spark the buffalo to migrate beyond the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park into the environs of Gardiner, Montana; the Stephens Creek vicinity; and the Gardiner Basin. At times, those areas have resembled killing fields.

The elected leadership of the representative tribes of the Great Sioux Nation (Očhéthi Šakówiŋ), our spiritual leaders, elders, and grassroots tribal members, have all been significantly impacted by these measures and have all, in numerous ways, registered their objections and disquiet. Pte Oyate, the Buffalo Nation, is as one with us, the ikce wicasa, the Lakota-Dakota people. We are inseparable from the buffalo, and it has been so since Creation.

Regrettably, it appears from USFS’s Custer Gallatin draft assessment, that more of the entirely unsatisfactory policies and practices in respect to the buffalo will continue to be implemented for the foreseeable future. Should that be the case, we contend that USFS will be in violation of the federal-Indian trust responsibility, a catalog of contraventions that extends from abrogating treaty rights, to disregarding religious and spiritual freedoms, through to mandated procedural requirements that federal agencies must undertake when adopting policies that impact affected tribal nations. Due to our cultural, ceremonial, and historical relationship with the buffalo, the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe is impacted by the

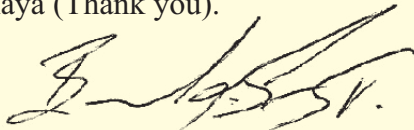
Custer Gallatin decision, and the fate of the buffalo in the region. Our legal status and recognition by the federal government as an “Associated Tribe of Yellowstone” adds weight and validation, if any were needed.

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe has received no notice from USFS on this draft assessment, plan, or projections. To the best of my knowledge, no tribal government from the Great Sioux Nation has, nor the Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association. Pre-decisional, meaningful, and thorough government-to-government consultation must be undertaken with the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and all other affected tribes before USFS moves forward in this process.

After undertaking a review of available documentation, the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe – the Hunkpati Dakota Oyate – the Mdewakanton and Ihanktonwan of the Kǎŋǵí Wakpá Oyate – has concluded that the buffalo should be listed as a species of conservation concern, as the USFS planning rule criteria for such status has been met. The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe is in accord with the Buffalo Field Campaign’s report *American Bison: A Species of Conservation Concern*. The buffalo migrating out of Yellowstone National Park should be returned to their natural habitat in the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The Yellowstone buffalo are not just sacred to tribal people, they are a national treasure, America’s national mammal – they are wild, not domestic livestock, and they should be “managed” as such, not as a zoo or artificial safari park population.

The benefits for tribal people of listing the buffalo as a species of conservation concern and freeing them to return to habitats like the Custer Gallatin National Forest should, by this point in time, require no explanation or elaboration. Spiritually, culturally, educationally, and in a subsistence context, the lives of our people would be greatly enhanced on the long road toward healing. Providing for the buffalo to roam in the Custer Gallatin National Forest will return, at least to that area, ecological balance, which is the definition of “the best available science.”

Pidamaya (Thank you).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Sazue, Sr.', written in a cursive style.

**Chairman Brandon Sazue, Sr., Crow Creek Sioux Tribe (Hunkpati Oyate).**