

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on June 15, 2023

M.L. 2021 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2023

Project Title: Reintroducing Bison to Spring Lake Park Reserve

Project Manager: Tom Lewanski

Affiliation: Dakota County

Mailing Address: 14955 Galaxie Avenue

City/State/Zip: Apple Valley, MN 55124

Phone: (952) 891-7961

E-mail: tom.lewanski@co.dakota.mn.us

Website: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q

Appropriation Amount: \$560,000

Amount Spent: \$560,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

This project will increase biodiversity, landscape heterogeneity, and ecosystem resiliency through the reintroduction of the primary historic prairie grazer in Minnesota, the American plains bison (*Bison bison*). By introducing bison, the 150 acres of prairie will become more diverse and will likely enhance ecosystem function and overall stability.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Prairie is one of Minnesota's most threatened ecosystems. Fire is often used as a practical and cost-effective means of prairie restoration and management. However, it is well documented that repeated use of fire, even on longer intervals, often results in an overabundance of grasses and a reduction in forbs or flowers, to the detriment of plant and animal diversity. Increasingly, grazing is being used to restore and maintain native grasslands. There is no more suitable grazer than the native American bison, having evolved with prairie ecosystems for thousands of years. Bison had profound impacts, primarily through their habit of feeding mostly on grasses and by grazing in patches. Forbs, that are otherwise suppressed, are released. Grasses recover between grazing events and persist in non-grazed areas. Re-establishment of bison grazing has been shown to reverse the loss of biodiversity from prairies with frequent burning regimes. Dakota County, in partnership with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd (MN DNR, Dakota County, the Minnesota Zoo, and

the Zollman Zoo), have installed the infrastructure required to keep the animals and park visitors safe and healthy and have reintroduced bison to the prairie in Spring Lake Park Reserve along the Mississippi River. Initially, eight bison have been brought in and it is anticipated that the herd will grow to about fifteen animals.

Prior to reintroducing the bison, County staff have spent several years collecting data on the plants and animals that live in or visit the prairie. The data from on-going monitoring will help to document the impact that the bison have on the prairie.

This project will serve to increase the number of bison in the MN Bison Conservation Herd, and it will serve as a demonstration for the public and other land managers as to how grazing can impact prairie restoration and management.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Dakota County has disseminated information about this project through the Parks webpage and Facebook, through numerous presentations and programs, and from many media stories. A few examples are below. It will take a number of years of surveys and monitoring to document the impact that the bison are having on the prairie. Dakota County is also developing interpretive panels that will be installed at several locations in the park to inform and educate park visitors about the bison.

Kare 11

WCCO

StarTribune

Agate

Minnesota Public Radio

Bring Me The News



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: September 9, 2024

ID Number: 2021-375

Staff Lead: Mike Campana

Project Title: Reintroducing Bison to Spring Lake Park Reserve

Project Budget: \$560,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Tom Lewanski

Organization: Dakota County

Office Telephone: (952) 891-7961

Email: tom.lewanski@co.dakota.mn.us

Web Address: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: June 15, 2023

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: June 15, 2023

Project Completion: February 28, 2023

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q

Appropriation Language: \$560,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota County, in partnership with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, to establish the holding facilities and infrastructure needed to reintroduce American plains bison (*Bison bison*) to improve the resiliency and biodiversity of the prairie at Spring Lake Park Reserve.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Dakota County, in conjunction with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, will reintroduce American plains bison (*Bison bison*) to the prairie of Spring Lake Park Reserve.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

The tall-grass prairie is one of Minnesota's most threatened ecosystems. Fire is often used as a practical and cost-effective means of prairie restoration and management. However, it is well documented that repeated use of fire, even on longer intervals, often results in an overabundance of graminoids and a reduction in forbs, to the detriment of floral and faunal diversity.

Increasingly, grazing is being used to restore and maintain native grasslands because of physical and behavioral attributes. There is no more suitable grazer than the native American bison, having evolved with prairie ecosystems for millennia. Bison had profound impacts, primarily through their habit of feeding selectively on grasses and grazing in patches. Forbs, that are otherwise suppressed, are released. Grasses recover between grazing events and persist in non-grazed areas. Re-establishment of bison grazing has been shown to reverse the loss of biodiversity from prairies with frequent burning regimes. Management that incorporates both fire and bison grazing have also been successfully implemented, resulting in a more heterogeneous landscape with improved ecosystem resiliency.

While there has been an increase in re-introduced bison onto the natural landscape, they are very small scattered herds, and there are few bison without detectable cattle DNA .

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Dakota County, in partnership with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, will reintroduce bison to about 130 acres of native and re-constructed prairie within Spring Lake Park Reserve along the Mississippi River near Hastings. ENRTF funds will be used to construct the infrastructure required to contain the bison and keep the animals and park visitors safe. Dakota County will receive bison that will be culled from the State's current herd at Blue Mounds S.P. and/or Minneopa S.P. Once culled, the animals will be transported to Spring Lake Park Reserve and released into the prepared range. The bison reintroduction is being paid for out of separate funds and will be occurring concurrently with the ENRTF-funded portion of the project. Research has demonstrated that bison increase plant and animal diversity, by grazing and wallowing, amongst other behaviors. For example, arthropods, which play an important role in prairie ecosystems, benefit from the presence of bison. In turn, grassland bird species benefit from increased food supply that include those arthropods, but also from the resulting landscape diversity created by grazing.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This project will increase biodiversity, landscape heterogeneity and ecosystem resiliency by reintroducing the primary historic prairie grazer in Minnesota, the American plains bison. By introducing bison, without cattle genes, the plant community will become more diverse and will likely enhance ecosystem function and overall stability via niche complementarity.

- Dakota County will assist the Minnesota Zoo's and the Minnesota DNR's goals of increasing the size of the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, which is an effort to establish a herd of bison that are free of detectable cattle mitochondrial DNA.

Park visitors will have opportunities to view and learn about bison.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Metro

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Design and construct infrastructure required for bison herd management.

Activity Budget: \$490,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will design and construct all infrastructure required for the bison. This will include perimeter fencing, gates, water provision and all other structures required to keep the bison contained, healthy and safe. The range, approximately 130-acres in size, will be designed to maximize the benefits to the prairie as well as provide opportunities for the public to view and learn about the bison. The containment fence will be constructed of wire mesh. When the required infrastructure is in place, Dakota County, working with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, will take ownership of bison culled from the States' herds and release them into the range at Spring Lake Park Reserve. The actual bison reintroduction is a separate, complementary project that is not utilizing ENRTF.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Finalize design of range, prepare bid and construction documents	September 30, 2021
Review proposals and select construction contractor	January 31, 2022
Construct/install bison related infrastructure including water structures	September 30, 2023

Activity 2: Design and construct a humane Bison Handling Facility

Activity Budget: \$70,000

Activity Description:

The handling facility will be used for an annual roundup of bison for genetic testing, animal transfers to manage genetic diversity and carrying capacity, micro-chip placement for animal ID and disease prevention and management. It will be designed using Grandin's humane livestock handling principles. It will include gathering/holding pens, driveway access, a curved passageway, gates, electrical service, water and squeeze chute.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Design handling facility	October 31, 2021
Prepare bid documents, review proposals and select construction contractor	January 31, 2022
Construct handling facility	September 30, 2022

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jay Biedny	Dakota County	Will Coordinate the construction of project related infrastructure.	No
Autumn Hubbell	Dakota County Parks	Coordinating the planning and implementation of the educational/interpretive components of the project.	No
Joe Walton	Dakota County Parks	Will lead the ecological monitoring, both pre and post treatment, to document the impacts that the bison are having on the prairie.	No
Ed Quinn	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	As a representative of the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, Ed has served and will continue to serve as an adviser to the Dakota County project. The Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd may also provide excess bison, culled from the existing herd, to start a herd at Spring Lake Park Reserve.	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

Information about this project and ENRTF funding will be presented on Dakota County's parks website using the ENRTF logo, during interpretive programs, with interested media and to natural resource and land management professionals. In addition, Dakota County will display ENRTF signs in several locations near the bison range.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

Dakota County acknowledges that there will be operational and maintenance expenses beyond the timeframe of the grant and is fully committed to providing the funding required to meet these expenses. This project is part of a larger effort by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Zoo to establish a bison herd that contain no detectable cattle genes, in the State. Dakota County will have access to the expertise and assistance of these organizations. County natural resource staff will oversee the management of the bison and the management and monitoring of the prairie.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Contracts and Services										
Outback Fence & Fabrication	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction of bison containment and management infrastructure (range). This includes fencing, gates and electric fencing. Costs include materials and supplies.				0.4		\$361,686	\$361,686	-
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction of bison watering and hardscape infrastructure. This includes waterlines, water tanks, gravel roadway. Costs include materials and supplies.				0.4		\$113,711	\$113,711	-
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Well (water) utility service for bison range at Spring Lake Park Reserve. Costs include materials and supplies.				0.2		\$14,603	\$14,603	-
							Sub Total	\$490,000	\$490,000	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
	Equipment	Handling Facility & Standalone Panels	For annual health check ups and herd maintenance and for trail closures to move bison between paddocks.					\$70,000	\$70,000	-
							Sub Total	\$70,000	\$70,000	-
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										

							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
							Grand Total	\$560,000	\$560,000	-

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
In-Kind	Value of the bison that the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources & Minnesota Zoological Gardens) will be providing to Dakota County	Bison from the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd will be used to start the bison herd at Spring Lake Park Reserve	Secured	\$10,000	\$10,000	-
			State Sub Total	\$10,000	\$10,000	-
Non-State						
Cash	Dakota County	These funds will be used throughout the project including the construction of the bison fencing, handling facility and other infrastructure for the bison.	Secured	\$164,000	\$164,000	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$164,000	\$164,000	-
			Funds Total	\$174,000	\$174,000	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [8ee645be-662.docx](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Bison range map (concept one) at Spring Lake Park Reserve...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dakota County Board Resolution	2af483cd-8f7.docx

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Invitation letter for Dakota County to join the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd	b9e06187-32e.pdf
Background check certification	4a1526e3-cd3.pdf
Bison fact sheet	5a6d39c1-b45.pdf
Bison groundbreaking	33cfcbaa-86b.pdf
Dakota County Fair poster	936125d1-c3a.pdf
Abstract	d37a32c6-5aa.docx
Bison on Prairie in Spring Lake Park Reserve	a8e80a9f-c88.jpe
Running bison at Spring Lake Park Reserve	ffeb03e9-b59.jpe
Bison at Spring Lake Park Reserve	2baaf716-e27.jpe
Bison fencing and gate at Spring Lake Park Reserve	54dda7d9-a6d.jpe

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

To bring the project budget in line with the LCCMR recommended funding amount of \$560,000, the education/interpretive components as presented in the project proposal have been removed. The recommended funding amount of \$560,000 has been distributed thus: \$360,000 - construction of all infrastructure required by the bison, \$200,000 - construction of the handling facility.

(TL-8/25/2021) We have taken out the watering infrastructure from the containment and management infrastructure budget item and put it in a separate budget item. The submitted workplan had a budget item: Construction of bison containment and management infrastructure. This includes fencing, waterers, gates, cattle guards, etc. Costs include materials and supplies, with an associated amount of \$360,000. The requested budget item: Construction of bison containment and management infrastructure (range). This includes fencing, gates and electric fencing. Costs include materials and supplies. The contract is with Outback Fencing and Fabrication. The amount is \$361,686.

A second requested professional contract budget item includes the construction of the bison watering and hardscape infrastructure in a separate contract. This includes waterlines, water tanks, gravel roadway. The amount in this budget item is \$88,314.

A third requested professional contract budget item includes water well utility service for the bison range. This will be a

separate contract. The amount in this budget item is \$40,000. The subtotal for the Professional or Technical Service Contract section is \$490,000.

The submitted workplan had a second professional contract budget item: Construct bison handling facility within the bison range at Spring Lake Park Reserve. Costs include materials and supplies. The amount in this item was \$200,000. Through the design phase we determined that it was more economically efficient to purchase the handling facility ourselves and construct it. As such, we have included an equipment budget item within the Capital Expenditures section for \$70,000 to purchase the handling facility and standalone panels.

The total budget amount remains the same at \$560,000.

Changes were made to bring the Activity budgets in-line with the budget changes made in August 2021 (TL 11/9/2021).

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts 	I would like to move \$25,367 from Well water utility service to the Infrastructure line. The well service was less expensive than we anticipated, while the expenses for putting in the water infrastructure cost more than anticipated. Well Service would then have a budget of \$14,603 and the infrastructure for water would be \$113,711, if the amendment is authorized.	July 29, 2022	Yes	July 29, 2022
2	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 06/30/2024 New Completion Date: 02/28/2023	LCCMR Completion Date change to get projects that finished prior to final reporting functionality being available in the online. See Activity Log for notes on final report approval.	May 23, 2023	Yes	June 1, 2023

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update July 16, 2023

Date Submitted: June 8, 2023

Date Approved: June 9, 2023

Overall Update

Dakota County completed construction of all the infrastructure needed for the bison reintroduction, including the handling facility. Eight female bison were transferred from the Minnesota Bison Herd partners, to the bison prairie in Spring Lake Park reserve in October and November, 2022. We will grow the herd to 15 in the next couple of years, adding to the State's bison conservation herd. Since 2019, County natural resource staff have been collecting biological data within the bison prairie so that we can track bison related changes over time. We are also in the process of completing interpretive displays and are planning outdoor education programs to share information about the prairie, the bison, and the relationship that indigenous peoples of the area have had with them for thousands of years. The project has been completed.

Activity 1

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Media regarding the Dakota County bison project:

Minnesota Public Radio: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/11/04/new-bison-herd-roams-prairie-at-dakota-county-park>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/bison-reintroduced-by-dakota-county-now-grazing-in-hastings-park/600221859/>

KSTP-TV: <https://kstp.com/tcl/today-on-twin-cities-live/bison-are-coming-to-the-metro/>

KARE 11-TV: <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/bison-brought-to-spring-lake-park-reserve/89-5d90783e-e9af-466a-b088-213833d4d050>

FOX9-TV: <https://www.fox9.com/news/bison-reintroduced-to-dakota-county-park>

Patch: <https://patch.com/minnesota/applevalley-rosemount/bison-herd-moves-dakota-county-heres-why-how-see-them>

Bring Me the News: <https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-lifestyle/dakota-county-reintroduces-native-bison-to-its-prairie>

WCCO-TV: <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/bison-return-to-prairie-in-dakota-county/>

St. Paul Pioneer Press: <https://www.twincities.com/2022/11/04/bison-herd-gets-a-new-home-to-roam-in-dakota-county/>

Minnesota Public Radio: [mprnews.org/story/2022/01/02/work-continues-to-reintroduce-bison-to-dakota-county-park](https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/01/02/work-continues-to-reintroduce-bison-to-dakota-county-park)

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Sun/ThisWeek: https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_thisweek/free/ground-breaks-for-bison-project-in-spring-lake-park-reserve/article_bf962154-f6af-11eb-9438-ff64680935de.html

Patch: <https://patch.com/minnesota/applevalley-rosemount/will-bison-return-dakota-county>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/metro-briefs-bison-can-roam-in-rosemount-park-with-help-of-state-grant/600076857/>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/are-bison-the-key-to-bringing-back-minnesota-prairies/572337262/>

Bison herd gets a new home to roam in Dakota County – Twin Cities

<https://www.fox9.com/news/bison-herd-introduced-at-dakota-county-park>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/4-new-bison-calves-born-at-spring-lake-park-reserve-in-dakota-county/>

<https://www.fox9.com/news/bison-calves-bring-joy-to-spring-lake-park-reserve-in-dakota-county>

We have also conducted a tour for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community bison work group and shared our design and implementation experience

Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2023

Date Submitted: June 8, 2023

Date Approved: June 9, 2023

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Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update March 2, 2023

Date Submitted: March 2, 2023

Date Approved: March 17, 2023

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St. Paul Pioneer Press: <https://www.twincities.com/2022/11/04/bison-herd-gets-a-new-home-to-roam-in-dakota-county/>

Minnesota Public Radio: [mprnews.org/story/2022/01/02/work-continues-to-reintroduce-bison-to-dakota-county-park](https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/01/02/work-continues-to-reintroduce-bison-to-dakota-county-park)

St. Paul Pioneer Press: <https://www.twincities.com/2021/07/24/bison-to-graze-in-dakota-county-park-by-fall-2022/>

Sun/ThisWeek: https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_thisweek/free-ground-breaks-for-bison-project-in-spring-lake-park-reserve/article_bf962154-f6af-11eb-9438-ff64680935de.html

Patch: <https://patch.com/minnesota/applevalley-rosemount/will-bison-return-dakota-county>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/metro-briefs-bison-can-roam-in-rosemount-park-with-help-of-state-grant/600076857/>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/are-bison-the-key-to-bringing-back-minnesota-prairies/572337262/>
Bison herd gets a new home to roam in Dakota County – Twin Cities

We have also conducted a tour for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community bison work group and shared our design and implementation experience with them. Participated in a podcast of the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update March 2, 2023

Date Submitted: March 2, 2023

Date Approved: March 17, 2023

Overall Update

Dakota County completed construction of all the infrastructure needed for the bison reintroduction, including the handling facility. Eight female bison were transferred from the Minnesota Bison Herd partners, to the bison prairie in Spring Lake Park reserve in October and November, 2022. We will grow the herd to 15 in the next couple of years, adding to the State's bison conservation herd. Since 2019, County natural resource staff have been collecting biological data within the bison prairie so that we can track bison related changes over time. We are also in the process of completing interpretive displays and are planning outdoor education programs to share information about the prairie, the bison, and the relationship that indigenous peoples of the area have had with them for thousands of years. The project has been completed.

Activity 1

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Media regarding the Dakota County bison project:

Minnesota Public Radio: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/11/04/new-bison-herd-roams-prairie-at-dakota-county-park>

Star Tribune: <https://www.startribune.com/bison-reintroduced-by-dakota-county-now-grazing-in-hastings-park/600221859/>

KSTP-TV: <https://kstp.com/tcl/today-on-twin-cities-live/bison-are-coming-to-the-metro/>

KARE 11-TV: <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/bison-brought-to-spring-lake-park-reserve/89-5d90783e-e9af-466a-b088-213833d4d050>

FOX9-TV: <https://www.fox9.com/news/bison-reintroduced-to-dakota-county-park>

Patch: <https://patch.com/minnesota/applevalley-rosemount/bison-herd-moves-dakota-county-heres-why-how-see-them>

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Status Update Reporting

Status Update December 1, 2022

Date Submitted: November 17, 2022

Date Approved: November 23, 2022

Overall Update

Dakota County completed construction of all the infrastructure needed for the bison reintroduction, including the handling facility. Eight female bison were transferred from the Minnesota Bison Herd partners, to the bison prairie in Spring Lake Park reserve in October and November, 2022. We will grow the herd to 15 in the next couple of years, adding to the State's bison conservation herd. Since 2019, County natural resource staff have been collecting biological data within the bison prairie so that we can track bison related changes over time. We are also in the process of completing interpretive displays and are planning outdoor education programs to share information about the prairie, the bison, and the relationship that indigenous peoples of the area have had with them for thousands of years. The project has been completed.

Activity 1

All infrastructure has been installed. This includes all fencing, gates, waterers, and electricity. The range increased in size from the 130 acres presented in the grant proposal to the final size of 150 acres. Bison have been transferred from Minnesota Bison Herd locations to Spring Lake Park Reserve.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

The handling facility has been completed and is fully operational. It contains gathering/holding pens, driveway access, a curved passageway, gates, electrical service, water and squeeze chute.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Media regarding the Dakota County bison project:

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Status Update Reporting

Status Update June 1, 2022

Date Submitted: May 13, 2022

Date Approved: May 16, 2022

Overall Update

Dakota County has almost completed all of the hardscaping infrastructure required for the project. In addition, the County has become a member of the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd. We are working with the partnership to put the final details on the number of bison and their age class makeup. We are on track to receive the bison in October of this year, 2022. The budget reflects encumbered funds that have not been fully spent, as work is not yet complete and final bills have not been submitted. Examples of information dissemination have been attached to this report (Bison fact sheet, Dakota County Fair poster, groundbreaking event announcement).

Activity 1

Dakota County hired a consultant firm in 2020 to assist in the design of the bison range, including the watering sources and the handling facility. Based on the design documents, Dakota County developed and released a Request for Proposals for Bid Pack 1, which included the fencing, gates, stand-alone gates and electrical service. Outback fence and Fabrication was the low bid and they were hired to construct the fencing, including gates, electrical service and provide stand-alone gates. To date, approximately 80% of the perimeter fencing and gates have been installed. The stand-alone gates have been delivered and the electrical service to the location of the electric fences and handling facility has been installed. A Request for Proposals for Bid Pack 2 was developed and released. This Bid pack included providing water service to the bison paddocks and construction of a trail and viewing platform. JL Theis was low bidder. They have installed the water lines to the paddocks. Water tanks have been ordered. Kimmes-Bauer has revitalized a formally capped well which will be used to provide water to the eastern paddocks and A&J Electric provided power to the well.

Activity 2

The handling facility, designed by the project consultant team has been ordered and will be delivered by July 1. Dairyland Supply won the bid on the handling facility. It will be constructed on site this summer.

Dissemination

Information about the bison project has been disseminated in numerous ways. A large sign is at the bison range site, providing information about the project, a bison fact sheet has been developed and is available on the County's website and staff have given numerous presentations about the project. The ENRTF grant information was and is presented in each case. Project fact sheet: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks/Resources/SLPR/Documents/BisonFactSheet.pdf>