

## United States Senate

October 27, 2022

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

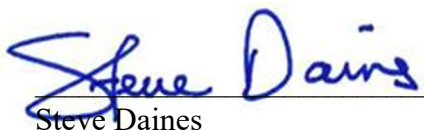
Director Stone-Manning,

On July 28, 2022, the Bureau of Land Management issued a Final Decision for the America Prairie Reserve Grazing Proposal covering nearly 70,000 acres of land in Phillips County. As you know first-hand, given the unprecedented nature of this proposal—authorizing grazing by non-production livestock, eliminating interior fencing, and modifying the season of use—this proposal has garnered controversy and raised concern from the agriculture sector, the life-blood of Montana’s rural economy.

Due to Montana ranchers’ century-long commitment to stewarding our lands and maintaining the highest rangeland standards, Montana landscapes continue to thrive despite drought, natural disasters, and other challenges. Given the agriculture sector’s conservation legacy, it was disappointing to see the Bureau of Land Management rush towards a final decision on the proposal without first responding to concerns raised.

Unfortunately, given the Biden administration’s refusal to collaborate with relevant state agencies and hold sufficient opportunities for local engagement on the Bureau of Land Management’s decision, Montanans still have unanswered questions over a year after the draft Environmental Analysis was released. Accordingly, I respectfully request responses to the attached questions within thirty days of receipt.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines  
United States Senator

Questions:

1. Where in federal statute or code does the Bureau of Land Management derive its authority to allow bison to graze on federal land outside of a Special Use Permit?
2. In the last twenty years, how many times has the Bureau of Land Management issued a permit to graze bison on federal land?
3. What rangeland or ecological objective is the Bureau of Land Management attempting to achieve by authorizing the removal of interior fencing necessary given the ability to utilize wildlife-friendly fencing?
4. In the last twenty years, how many applications has the Bureau of Land Management approved requesting removal of fences for cattle or sheep and what level of environmental review was conducted for each application?
5. Does the Bureau of Land Management agree that cattle and sheep generally concentrate in their favorite or the best areas of an allotment in the absence of interior fencing? Does the Bureau of Land Management have any evidence that bison behave different?
6. In the last twenty years, how many applications has the Bureau of Land Management approved requesting season-long grazing for cattle and sheep and what level of environmental review was conducted for each application?
7. How will the Bureau of Land management conduct range monitoring to ensure range standards are maintained?
8. Did the Bureau of Land Management identify socioeconomic impacts within the Environmental Analysis? What projections, modelling, or data informed this economic analysis?
9. Does the Bureau of Land Management consider the bison herd to be a conservation herd or a commercial herd? How is that conclusion reflected in the economic impact analysis and how does that conclusion affect the Bureau of Land Management's authority under the first question?