

RC10

February 11, 2014

Honorable Board of Game Members,

Being a 42 year Alaskan resident of the Delta Junction area, I am also an advocate for the free ranging plains bison that have roamed around the delta area since 1928. In the 1980's a "Barley Project" was planned around the headwaters of the Delta Clearwater River, the core of those bison's winter range. Before and during that time a lot of hard work went into making sure that the bison herd remained free ranging, so legislation was drawn up to create the Delta Junction Bison Range to help protect the herd from the expanding agriculture efforts in the area. A working group was formed in the 1980's to recommend department actions that could be implemented by Fish & Game to better manage the herd to reduce bison agriculture conflicts. Some which met with stiff public opposition are fencing, and herd reduction or removal but they are in the existing 5 year management plan. The "Barley Project" failed in the early 1980's and then until a few years ago the Division of Agriculture did no crop damage assessments for any animal, moose, waterfowl or bison. Then they persuaded the Department of Fish & Game that they needed to be done. The Bison herd size & composition is determined by the acting area wildlife biologist and is managed successfully thru hunting by drawing permits. Drawing permit fees are set or determined through legislation which is good, unless the legislation to raise that fee could inevitably be detrimental to the existence of the free range status of the Delta Bison herd. Then it is not good! I have read the 5 year Bison Management plan and oppose those recommendations that wish to reduce herd size or free range status and to pay for fencing. I speak from experience that this herd is blamed for damage it had little or nothing to do with and more often than not the weather is the biggest factor for farming in Interior Alaska. When you think of Interior Alaska do you think of farming, or hunting and gathering? Please do not act on or support the recommendations of the Delta Bison Working Group to the Department of Fish & Game 5 Year management plan recommending herd size reduction or destruction, or anything to do with fencing, also House Bill 202A sponsored by Representative Eric Feige, which is worded to increase bison permit fee from \$10

to \$20, would use some of that fee increase to fund a cost sharing fencing program or potential bison property damage.

Respectfully, David Davenport