

MONTANA BISON HUNT REGULATIONS

Treaty Harvest Regulations and Protocols for Bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area

Members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) engaging in hunting and harvest of wild bison on open and unclaimed lands surrounding Yellowstone National Park are subject to the following regulations:

Permitting Requirements

Exercising the tradition of “Going to Bison” for CTUIR members should be considered a communal or group effort as it was prior to the Treaty. The successful harvest and processing of bison in the field requires significant planning, equipment and support. CTUIR Treaty Bison Harvest Permits are joint application “party” hunting permits requiring the signature of a “Hunt Party Leader” and a minimum of 1 assistant to assure a safe and successful hunt. All applicants must have participated in a CTUIR bison hunt orientation within three years prior to the application. Hunt Party Leaders will also be required to participate in an annual pre-hunt orientation prior to receiving their permit to be updated on any new hunt conditions and issues. Permit applications that do not include all required information for Hunt Assistants or are otherwise incomplete will not be considered. ***Applications must be submitted at least 15 days prior to the desired hunt date to allow for review and processing.***

The Hunt Party Leader is responsible for conduct of the Hunt Assistants on their team during the hunt and for recording and reporting of all harvest data in a complete and timely fashion. The Hunt Party Leader and at least three Hunt Assistants must be present during all permitted hunting. Hunt Assistants may not harvest bison after the Hunt Party Leader has left the hunting area and will be in violation of Tribal regulations if they do so.

Coordination with Tribal Enforcement Required

The CTUIR is required to provide their own law enforcement oversight of the treaty bison hunt. The Hunt Party Leader is required to coordinate with Umatilla Tribal Police Game Enforcement at least five working days prior to the planned hunt to allow adequate time for officers to make travel arraignments. This requirement may be waived at the discretion of the Umatilla Tribal Game Enforcement. Hunting without meeting this enforcement coordination requirement will be considered a violation of the permit.

Eligibility

Tribal members eligible to exercise off-reservation treaty hunting rights, in good standing with the CTUIR Fish and Wildlife Commission and who have attended the orientation administered by the Commission within the past three years may apply to the Commission for a CTUIR Treaty Bison Harvest Permit as a “Hunt Party Leader” or “Hunt Assistant”. Applicants may not apply to more than one party permit per year unless a waiver is provided by the Fish and Wildlife Commission and participation pursuant to the additional permit does not impact the legal exercise of the first relative to the requirement of a minimum number of permitted Hunt Assistants.

Hunt Area

The Bison Permit hunt area is described as those open and unclaimed lands found within the State of Montana and outside of Yellowstone National Park lands, except for the Royal Teton Ranch Bison Buffer Zone U.S. Forest Service lands or any lands closed by the U.S. Forest Service for safety reasons. The West Yellowstone area is open for hunting. The Wildlife Program will provide general area maps for hunting parties.

Season and Bag Limits

The Treaty Bison Hunt Season is from September 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026. March 1-31 is still bull only harvest.

Weapons & Ammunition

Only a center fire rifle with bullet weight of 150 grain or larger is permitted for bison hunting.

Harvest Limitations and Game Waste

All party members identified on a valid bison permit may actively hunt bison. However, only two bison per party may be on the ground at any one time. Each bison carcass must be completely processed and off the hunt field before another animal is taken. This includes hide, head, heart, liver and meat. Bone and gut pile may be left in place. Failure to strictly follow this provision may be grounds for prosecution for game waste. Note: The Fish and Wildlife Commission strongly recommends hunt teams that have not previously killed and processed a bison limit their first kill to one animal on the ground at a time.

Harvest Reporting

The CTUIR Treaty Bison Harvest Permit shall consist of two parts as follows:

1. A hunt reporting card. All Hunt Party Leaders are required to submit a completed kill report following completion of the hunt or within 72 hours of the end of the season. Lead Hunter is required to update harvest information on the permit prior to taking another animal or leaving the field. All hunters, including those who are not successful, must return the completed kill report in order to remain in good standing with the Commission and to be eligible for future hunts.

2. A hunt permit. The Hunt Party Leader and each permitted Hunt Assistant will be issued a current year hunt permit. This permit will include the hunter's name and enrollment number, hunt season, bag limit, and must be validated by signatures of the hunter and Commission Chair. This permit must always be in the possession of each hunter during the hunt.

Provision of Assistance

Non-members or Members not eligible to exercise treaty hunting rights off-Reservation (or Non-member Indians with treaty hunting rights for the Yellowstone area) may assist a Tribal member with the field dressing, retrieval and transportation of a downed bison to the Members' hunting vehicle but may not assist or accompany the Member with any aspect of the pursuit or harvest of the animal. Such assistance is in addition to and shall not be considered a substitute for the minimum hunt assistants required by the Off-Reservation Bison Permit.

Requirement to Disclose

The hunt party leader and all hunt assistants must have their Tribal I.D. card and a valid Off-Reservation Bison Permit issued by the CTUIR Fish and Wildlife Commission in their possession while hunting or while in possession of a bison or parts thereof. Tribal I.D. and Off-Reservation Bison Permit must be presented upon request to any Tribal, State or Federal enforcement personnel.

Off Road Travel and Safety

The use of over snow vehicles (snowmobiles or ATV's equipped with tracks) for bison hunting is allowed where not specifically restricted. Shooting from or across groomed snowmobile trails or off any vehicle is prohibited.

The Bison Permit Hunt Areas may be directly adjacent to the town of Gardiner, Montana or numerous other dispersed residences. Discharging a firearm in a negligent manner or in any posted safety zone is a violation of the CTUIR Treaty Bison Harvest Permit and Tribal Hunting Regulations.

Provision for Emergency Closure

Off-reservation bison hunting is restricted by these regulations, annual harvest quotas and any special annual regulations established by the

Commission. Hunt seasons and permits may be closed by the Commission under emergency order in response to biological or human safety needs.

All other Tribal regulations apply.