

Buffalo Restoration

A powerful story of reconnection

2021 Lander, WY, Wind River Reservation. TNC returned 50 animals to the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Nations.

Photo Credit: Brad Christensen

Buffalo were once the keystone of North America's grasslands, upholding thousands of natural relationships that ensured ecological and cultural prosperity. Their presence on the land met the needs of birds, wildflowers, amphibians and people alike.

In the 1800s, these vital relationships were severed by U.S. policies intended to harm and control Native peoples through the eradication of buffalo.

By 1889, only a few hundred wild buffalo remained.

Today, the loss of this amazing animal still reverberates across the land and within communities.



Before 1800, as many as 60 million American bison ranged from the Arctic Circle to northern Mexico.

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THE OPPORTUNITY

Each year, TNC's buffalo herds (also known as the American [bison](#)) produce approximately 1,500 buffalo in need of new homes. By returning these buffalo to tribal lands, we are healing and restoring a web of natural relationships that has been broken for hundreds of years.

THE SOLUTION

Indigenous Peoples are the original stewards of North America's lands and waters. They have sovereign rights and responsibilities to care for their ancestral homelands, and their conservation expertise is critical to advancing the health of our shared Earth. The InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), Tanka Fund and Native Nations are leaders in buffalo restoration. Today, TNC is working in deep partnership to explore how we can restore buffalo, grasslands and communities at scale.

THE NEED

Restoring buffalo requires trust building, animals, land, infrastructure and more. The \$7M fundraising goal will support the return of, 1,500 buffalo to tribal nations across the U.S., as well the capacity and resource needs to co-create a sustainable vision for partnership in buffalo restoration.

BY THE NUMBERS

7M

Fundraising need to support the co-creation and implementation of Indigenous-led buffalo rematriation initiatives.

1,500+

Buffalo to be transferred from TNC to tribal nations across the United States by 2024.

80+

Native Nations restoring buffalo across the continent—supporting lands, livelihoods and communities.

1M

Acres of tribal land managed for buffalo.



Many imperiled grassland birds, such as the Bobolink, benefit from the presence of buffalo.

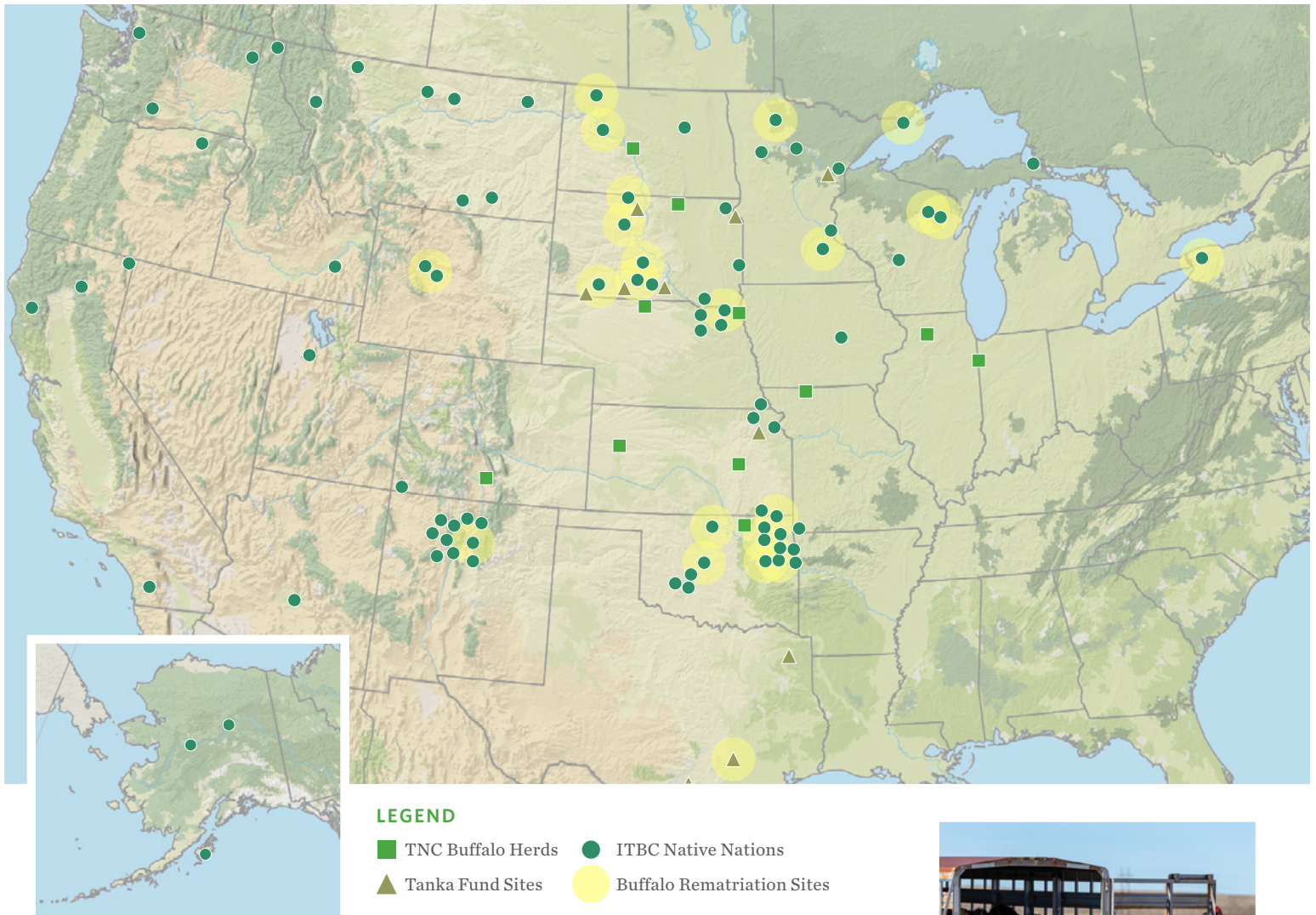
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WEBSITES

nature.org
itbcbuffalonation.org
tankafund.org

Buffalo Herds and Rematriation Sites



“The significance of buffalo extends beyond their physical presence on the land... They represent a positive force toward spiritual and cultural revitalization, ecological restoration and conservation, food sovereignty, health, economic development and much more as each buffalo is brought back home.”

Troy Heinert, Sicangu Lakota, ITBC Executive Director



“The Lakota word ‘Tanka’ means ‘great’ or ‘large.’ Our vision to bring buffalo back to Native lands and people is just as big and significant...Building up our buffalo herds strengthens Tribes and makes us more resilient.”

Nick Hernandez, Tanka Fund



Photo Credits: Brad Christensen (both)

LEARN MORE

about how you can support the Buffalo Restoration Program today.

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