

Bison Specialist Group



American:

Co-Chair

Keith Aune

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RLA Focal Point

Cormack Gates

ccgates@nucleus.com

Keith Aune is based in Bozeman, Montana, U.S.A. and works across North America on the ecological restoration of the American bison. He is affiliated with the North American Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The BSG has about
64 members, 40
(American) + 24
(Europe).

European:

Co-Chair /RLA Focal Point

Wanda Olech

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Wanda Olech is based in Warsaw, Poland and work for the Warsaw University of Life Sciences. She chairs the European Bison Conservation Center, and is also affiliated with the European Bison Friends Society (www.smz.waw.pl).

2011 Update

American:

- The 2010 status review and conservation guidelines was printed and distributed throughout North America.
- A new BSG chair was established as Dr. Cormack Gates was replaced by Keith Aune.
- Members of the BSG have engaged in multiple bison restoration projects in North America and the species is on track toward ecological recovery.
- Bison restoration initiatives in North America are now based on the best available science and seek to ecologically restore this keystone herbivore to enhance the integrity of America's grasslands.

European:

- The joint program for wisent conservation in Europe (EBCC), aimed to preserve the gene pool of the species and improve its management was initiated and implemented in 2010. Our network now consists of main office and 10 regional centers.
- Our annual conference in 2011 gathered more than 130 people from the whole Europe.
- The fourth volume of European Bison Conservation Newsletter was released last year.
- Continuation of reintroduction projects (Carpathians, Russia, West Poland) and new perspectives in Denmark, Germany and Spain.
- We have prepared an application for Life+ fund, to support international activities.

Success Stories

American:

- We distributed 500 copies of our status review and conservation guidelines, which prompted many agencies and NGO's to implement restoration and recovery of the American bison. Site based restoration projects are now underway in Mexico, U.S. and Canada.. The IUCN status review and guidelines informed those species conservation efforts.

European:

- We are the most proud of new herds of E. bison. The reintroduction project in the E. Carpathians is developing wonderfully. Population of the species is increasing steadily, and more than 80% of herds are actively involved in our conservation program.

Challenges

- The recovery of the **American** bison is challenged by conflicting legal status and confused public perceptions about this species. Throughout its historic range bison are typically perceived as an extinct ancient relic or domestic livestock. This confusion hinders social, and political acceptance of conservation efforts to restore bison as wildlife.
- Improving the legal status of **European** bison as well as management practices especially in ex situ conservation. Also for aim of conservation program improve the cooperation and information exchange provided by EBCC.

Future Goals

American:

- We are developing new goals for the reformed American BSG following our success in completing the status review. We are conducting a member renewal and recruitment process to engage new members and retire those who are no longer able to serve on the BSG.

European:

- Increase the population size, and save its genetic diversity
- In captive herds improve of the welfare of animals.
- The return of free roaming E. bison to western Europe
- Improvement of EBCC structure

BSG is scheduling a summer meeting to identify activities and future role of the group.

