

save the "pure" wood bison sub-species from both disease and genetic contamination by the WBNP herd, which is largely comprised of hybrids of wood and plains bison. In fact, truly pure wood bison no longer exist. The panel states that the salvage of some genetic material from the WBNP herd is unnecessary, although it makes allowance for the use of several small groups of animals of the wood bison type for breeding purposes.

This ignores the importance of genetic diversity. In Europe, scientists working on the recovery of the European bison are concerned about the low diversity of their herd, but do not have the animals to augment the gene pool. In Canada, we are poised to destroy the largest, most diverse American bison gene pool in existence. The bottom line is: once it is gone, it is gone forever - there will be no second chance. The vaunted effort to "save" a sub-species may therefore have irreversible effects on the future viability of American bison.

Wood Buffalo National Park, and its bison, are threatened by a variety of factors including hydroelectric development, pulp mill construction, and logging, a fact the panel recognizes. Yet it refuses to consider agricultural development a threat or to place its solution for the diseased bison question into this broader context. Removal of the WBNP bison herd will place considerable stress on the park and the ecosystem it protects and this impact has not been fully examined by the panel.

If, as the bison are removed, wolves turn to moose or

fur-bearing animals as alternate sources of prey, the panel recommends that the wolves, too, be killed. In addition, the report gives no consideration to any of the other elements of the complex food chain that has wolves at the top. This is simplistic wildlife management that fails to respect a complex ecosystem designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The CNF concludes that protection of the park ecosystem overrides single species management; that preservation of the largest bison gene pool in existence outweighs the value of an arbitrarily-defined pure stock which has very little genetic variability; that the risk of failure of this initiative, and of long-term damage to both bison and Wood Buffalo National

Park, is far greater than the risks currently faced by cattle, humans and healthy bison; and that the slaughter is totally unwarranted given the evidence provided by the panel.

The federal minister of environment, Robert de Cotret and the minister of agriculture, Donald Mazankowski, will soon make a decision based on the panel's recommendations. We urge all CNF members to express opposition to this senseless slaughter, even if their decision is made by the time this message reaches you. Write to both ministers, as well as to Prime Minister Mulroney, and express your concern. All letters should be sent to: House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6 (no stamp required).

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