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**Bison Industry Wraps Up Week-Long International Gathering**  
***Black Hills Gathering Celebrates Heritage, Maps Future***

The largest U.S. gathering of buffalo producers and supporters in more than a decade wrapped up over the weekend, as the nearly 600 attendees headed home from the International Bison Conference in South Dakota's Black Hills.

For more than a week, participants from the United States, Canada and seven other countries explored the marketing and production issues important to sustaining the growth of the burgeoning bison industry. According to one industry leader, this third-ever international gathering of the international bison industry comes at a key time for producers and consumers alike.

"In the past few years, bison has gained in popularity as people are discovering that they can have the best of good health and great taste," said Dave Carter, executive director of the United State's National Bison Association. "The activities at the International Bison Conference helped producers and marketers focus on the important steps necessary to continuing our growth as a natural, high-quality part of the food marketplace."

Sessions conducted during the weeklong conference highlighted both the heritage and the future of the bison industry.

Four chefs addressing the conference demonstrated the versatility of bison meat as they prepared dishes ranging from short ribs to tenderloin. Dr. Kevin Weiland, founder of the Dakota Diet, discussed the role that naturally-raised bison can play in contributing to personal health and weight maintenance. And, Erika Lesser of Slow Food USA announced during her speech at the conference that bison have officially been boarded onto the Slow Food "Ark of Taste," a metaphorical vessel designed to promote sustainable and heritage foods.

Allen Savory of Holistic Management International reviewed how replicating the natural foraging habits of bison can serve as a valuable element in rangeland

management, and internationally renowned animal handling expert Dr. Temple Grandin of Colorado State University presented information on low-stress management of buffalo.

Terry Kremeniuk, executive director of the Canadian Bison Association, said, “The North American Bison Industry recognizes that our customers not only want high quality products, but expect that we will raise our herds with respect toward the animals and the environment in which they live. The International Bison Conference provided valuable lessons for all of us as we move forward in the marketplace.”

The formal conference activities kicked off at Mount Rushmore on Tuesday, July 24 with keynote presentations by entrepreneur Ted Turner and former U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle. Daschle praised the role of private ranchers in restoring bison to the North American ecosystem.

“A century ago, there were fewer than 1,000 bison left alive. But across North America, buffalo are back; half a million strong,” Daschle said.

Turner, who owns the world’s largest bison herd, noted that the industry has suffered its share of challenges over the past two decades. He added that he established his chain of Ted’s Montana Grill restaurants in large part to provide a stronger marketing outlet for bison.

Following his speech to the conference, Turner was inducted into the National Buffalo Hall of Fame.