National Bison Range ~ Historical Outline and Trivia Tidbits

1903  First National Wildlife Refuge established by President Theodore Roosevelt at Pelican Island, Florida.

1908  May 23 – President Theodore Roosevelt signs legislation creating the National Bison Range
1909  October – First bison arrive at Refuge. The National Bison Society purchased them from the Conrad herd (Kalispell, MT) and donated them to the Bison Range.

1910  Spring – Eleven calves born first spring

1921  December 22 – Executive Order 3569 designates the Bison Range as “…refuges and breeding grounds for birds.

1933  Big Medicine born. A rare white bison, he had with a brown top knot of hair and blue eyes.

1934  Civilian Conservation Corps works their first of just two summers at Bison Range. Builds Red Sleep Mountain Drive and front gate, puts in Day Use Area.

1959  August 25 – Big Medicine dies at age 26. He is on display at the Montana Historical Society’s Montana Museum (Helena, MT).

1966  Self guided auto trips allowed around Red Sleep Mountain Drive. An episode of the Lassie television show is filmed.

1982  New Visitor Center with displays open to the public.


2005  Ervin Davis, Bison Range Volunteer, receives National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer of the Year award.

2008  May 23 – Centennial Celebration and Birthday Bash.