**Center Pole.wav**

Food banks are trying to adjust after the U.S. Department of Agriculture cut $500 million dollars from a nationwide emergency food assistance program. One of those impacted organizations meets a pressing need for food access within the Crow and Northern Cheyenne tribes of southeastern Montana.

Yellowstone Public Radio’s Kayla Desroches (deh-ROHSH) reports from Crow Agency,one recent Tuesday in April."

It’s late Tuesday morning in a gas station parking lot off interstate 90, and Center Pole founder Peggy Wellknown Buffalo directs the set-up of a table, soon to be stacked with boxes of canned salmon, loose potatoes and meat. Cars are already lining up to pick up food.

**(LOCATION\_Peggy “We try to be in a location where it’s easier for them to come from the housing projects and around town.”)**

With only a few small grocery stores and gas stations located across the large swath of southeast Montana, the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations are considered food deserts.

The grassroots non-profit Center Pole tries to fill that gap with help from the Montana Food Bank Network, and Wellknown Buffalo says the need is high.

**(SOMETIMES “Sometimes we stay until three, but today, a lot of people have been calling.”)**

Wellknown Buffalo talks about her concerns going forward. Montana Food Bank Network recently learned about cuts slated for more-than 70 food banks across the state - Center Pole included.

Montana Food Bank Network distributes food through the Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP - a United States Department of Agriculture program that directs food to low income areas at no cost.

Montana Food Bank Network Program Manager Jesse Schraufnagel (shrawf-nay-guhl) says they had committed to delivering food through the end of the year when they learned that one of TEFAP’s primary funding streams had been eliminated.

**(FORECASTED “And as of the beginning of this month, all of those truck loads have been cancelled, so what that amounts to is 40 percent of our total TEFAP allocation that we’re anticipating not receiving through the end of the year.’)**

According to records through the Montana Food Bank Network, the cuts account for more than a quarter of the total food Center Pole estimates it distributes in a year.

Wellknown Buffalo says Center Pole plans to navigate the cuts to their pantry by establishing public gardens to grow food and Indigenous plants they source from the hills in the region.

**(FOOD “We’re gonna get hit with the craziness of what our government is doing, but the ones who are gonna suffer is my people. Us. Natives.”)**

Reporting from Crow Agency, I’m KD.

**Roedel Tribal Water Law NNN.wav**A Native American law group has launched a free online resource to help Tribal Nations obtain legal information about their water rights that they might not be able to afford. As the Mountain West News Bureau’s Kaleb Roedel [RAY-dull] reports, this comes at a time when tribes face increasing water challenges.

**SCRIPT:**

The resource is called The Headwaters Report – created by the Native American Rights Fund.

The report breaks down the ins and outs of tribal water law … updates what’s going on in the courts and Congress … and highlights what water issues are on the horizon.

Daniel Cordalis is a staff attorney with the Colorado-based group. He says some tribes will pay third-party firms thousands of dollars a month to provide them with that information.

**“And it's information every tribe should have. And the cost is a barrier to getting this kind of information for a lot of Tribal Nations, and it shouldn't be one. I think it lifts the whole tribal communities up if they're able to have the same information.”**

Cordalis says safeguarding tribal waters is increasingly important in the West … where drought is shrinking tribes’ water supplies, wildfires are damaging their watersheds, and population booms are straining water resources.

For the Mountain West News Bureau, I’m Kaleb Roedel.

**OPTIONAL OUTRO:** The Headwaters Report can be found at the Native American Rights Fund’s website – N-A-R-F-dot-org.

**Roedel Native Voters NNN.wav**

The House recently passed legislation to require people to prove they are U.S. citizens when they register to vote. As the Mountain West News Bureau’s Kaleb Roedel [RAY-dull] reports, Native American groups argue if the proposal becomes law, it would make it harder for them to vote.

**Bison Transfer.wav  
  
SCRIPT:**

The Safeguard American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE, Act would also require people to register to vote in person. That means they could no longer register through the mail or online.

That would make it difficult for many tribal members, who live on reservations that are far from cities and highways, says Jacqueline De Leon [Deh-Lee-own]. She’s an attorney with the Native American Rights Fund, and a member of the Isleta [uhh-SLETT-uhh] Pueblo in New Mexico.

**“The nearest election offices for many rural Native Americans can be over 100 miles round trip.”**

Voters would also have to show proof of U.S. citizenship – like a passport or birth certificate. De Leon [Deh-Lee-own] says the bill claims that tribal members could use their Tribal IDs…

**“But Tribal IDs would have to have a place of location of birth on them to qualify. And most, if not all, Tribal IDs don't have that on them.”**

But the SAVE Act does face long odds in the Senate … where seven Democrats would have to join Republicans to allow it to proceed to a vote.

For National Native News, I’m Kaleb Roedel.

Bison are being restored to tribal lands across our region and the Great Plains. As the Mountain West News Bureau's Rachel Cohen reports, a herd managed by a city in Colorado (Denver) is playing a big role.

**Body**

A few bison jumped into a grass-lined trailer.

\*\*Bison jumping\*\*

They were heading to the Kiowa Tribe in Oklahoma.

The bison are part of two herds that live in mountain parks owned by the City and County of Denver. And the city gave these 10 away so the Kiowa Tribe could start its first herd in over 150 years. Bison were hunted to near-extinction in the 1800s.

Rick Williams is Oglala Lakota and Northern Cheyenne and was at the bison transfer in March. He says it included a ceremony and songs for a safe journey.

WILLIAMS *The buffalo were a sacred animal to us. You know, we knew that they provided all of our economy and our lifestyle and everything that we needed to survive.*

Denver’s donation is part of a larger effort to give surplus bison from conservation herds – and national parks – to tribes to restore cultural and environmental connections.

Over the past seven years, Denver has given 140 bison to 10 tribes. That includes the Northern Arapaho in Wyoming and the Northern Cheyenne in Montana.

For the Mountain West News Bureau, I’m Rachel Cohen