

First 2017 Report from your National Bison Association Board Member.

There was a record turnout for the NBA Winter Conference. Somewhere around 450 to 500 attendees depending on whether you go by Conference or Banquet numbers. The Renaissance hotel in Denver was actually maxed out for group seating and dining space.

As always, the number of bison people from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa was quite high. If you have not recently attended the Winter Conference, consider putting it or the Summer Conference on your schedule. There is great value in the educational sessions. The food is terrific. The friends and comrades are delightful.

Your NBA Board met twice during the Winter Conference. Board meetings are open to the membership. These meetings often run two or more hours. The agendas are normally lengthy. The conversations and deliberations are thoughtful and in depth. Your Board members work well together.

NBA finances are good and ended 2016 better than planned. The successful Winter Conference will give us a strong financial start for 2017.

The membership approved numerous non-controversial changes to the By-Laws. Most of those changes cleaned up grammatical errors or structural errors in the document. Some brought the By-Laws into agreement with actual accepted practice. Some dealt with ambiguous or contradictory clauses.

By-Laws are important. They provide a necessary and agreed upon set of operating rules. Perhaps even more important, good, clear By-Laws are a great benefit to an organization during times of stress or turmoil. One addition to the By-Laws requires the Past President to review the association's compliance with the By-Laws each year. If any practice deviates from the By-Laws the Past President is required to recommend either a change in practice or a change in the By-Laws. That single clause should do a lot to keep the Association running smooth.

The **Wisconsin Bison Producers Association's** Annual Meeting is February 25, in Bonduel.

Many Wisconsin Bison farmers on the western side of the state belong to the MnBA but there is a solid and active group concentrated in eastern Wisconsin. My Gail and I will be there to learn and celebrate with those good folks.

The **MnBA Annual Conference is March 31 to April 2**. The timing is good. The location is swell. It will be grand to see you there. That event is no doubt detailed elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The **International Bison Conference is July 4 to 8**. It will be in Big Sky, Montana. The IBC, which occurs every four years, is in place of the NBA Summer Conference. This will be a super summer getaway if you can make it. We have been to many Summer Conferences but this will be our first IBC. Winter in Central Minnesota, has been remarkably easy. We may get some rough weather yet but even so, it is too late to be a hard winter.

Our pastures were in excellent shape going into winter. With this mild winter, I expect they will get off to a strong start in the spring.

Our animals are doing well. Bison prices are good. We are looking forward to a very fine 2017. I hope it is the same for you. Best regards. Tom Barthel, Region Five NBA Director.