

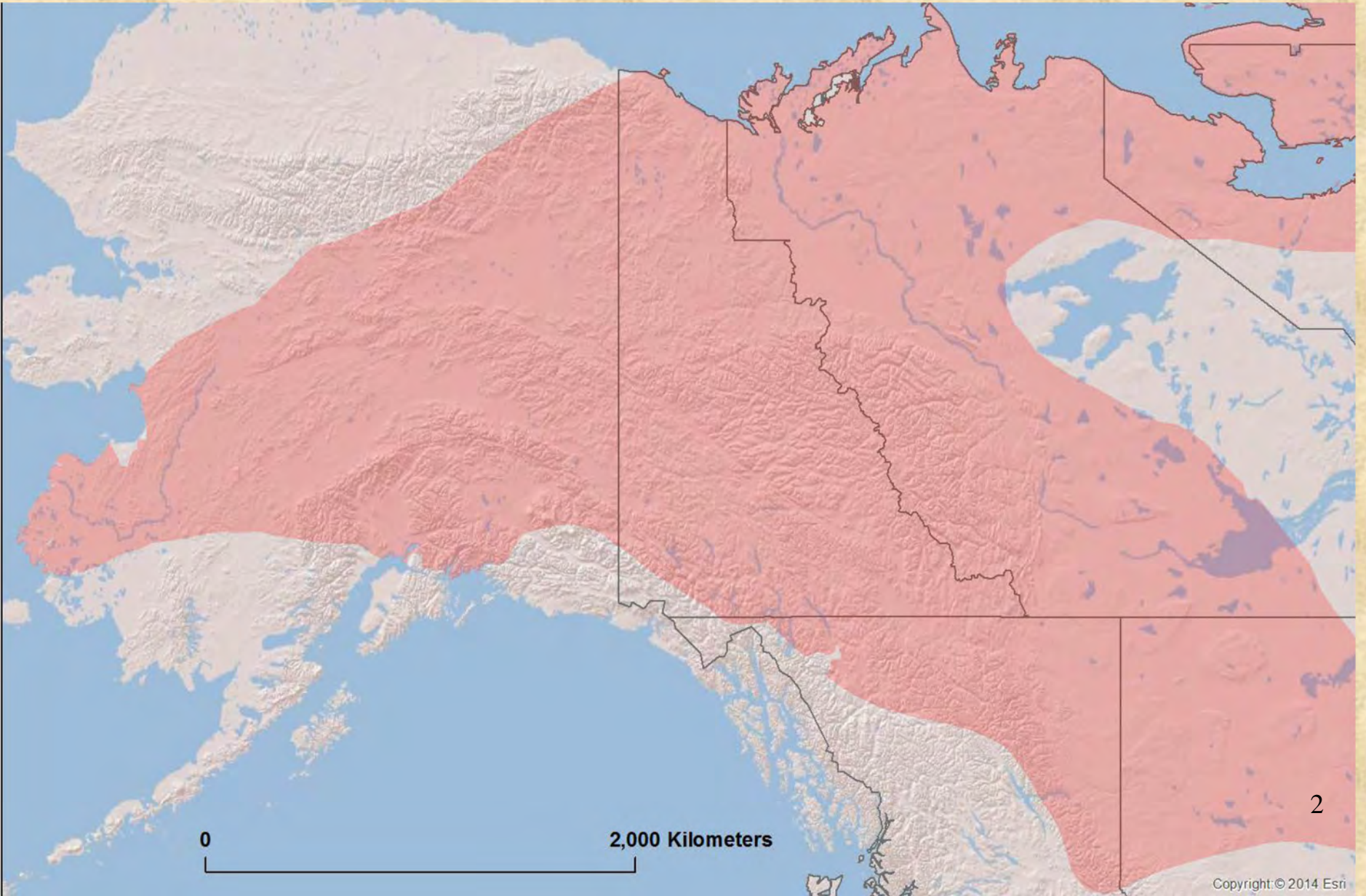
Alaska Wood Bison Restoration Project Update



Tom Seaton
BOG February 2017



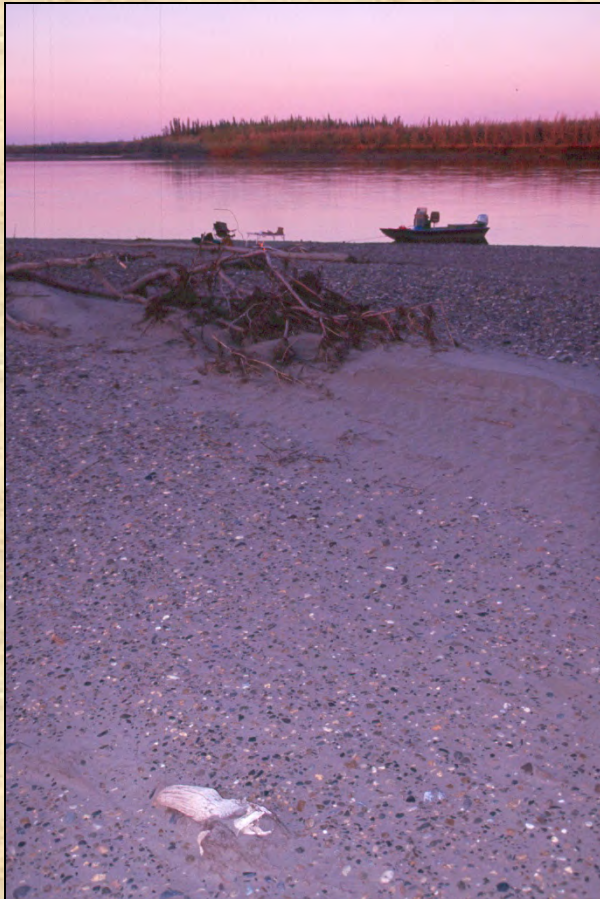
Wood Bison Original Range



Wood Bison Range 120 YBP



Wood bison bones are present across much of Alaska.



Bison horn core found on the
Porcupine River

Native elders provided historic accounts of wood bison



The late
Reverend
David Salmon,
Chalkyitsik, AK

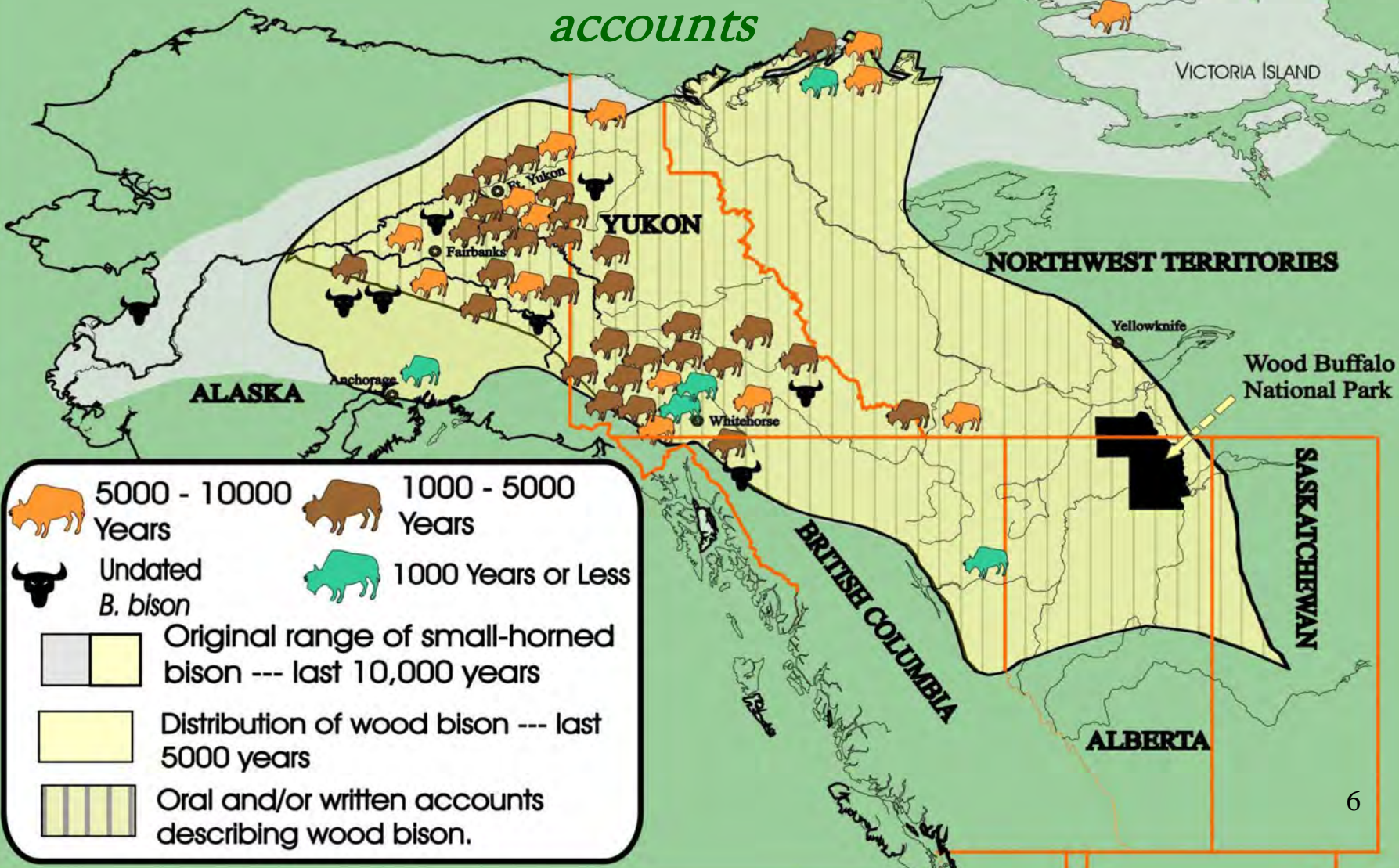
- Bison were hunted and used as a source of food and materials.
- Bison disappeared within last few centuries.



The late
Mary Sam
Beaver, AK

Currently known original range

*Putting the information together:
Radiocarbon dates and historical
accounts*



Strong Public Support



Local Involvement



Wood Bison Planning Team






- 28 different interest groups
- 5 Year plan approved by State and Federal Boards

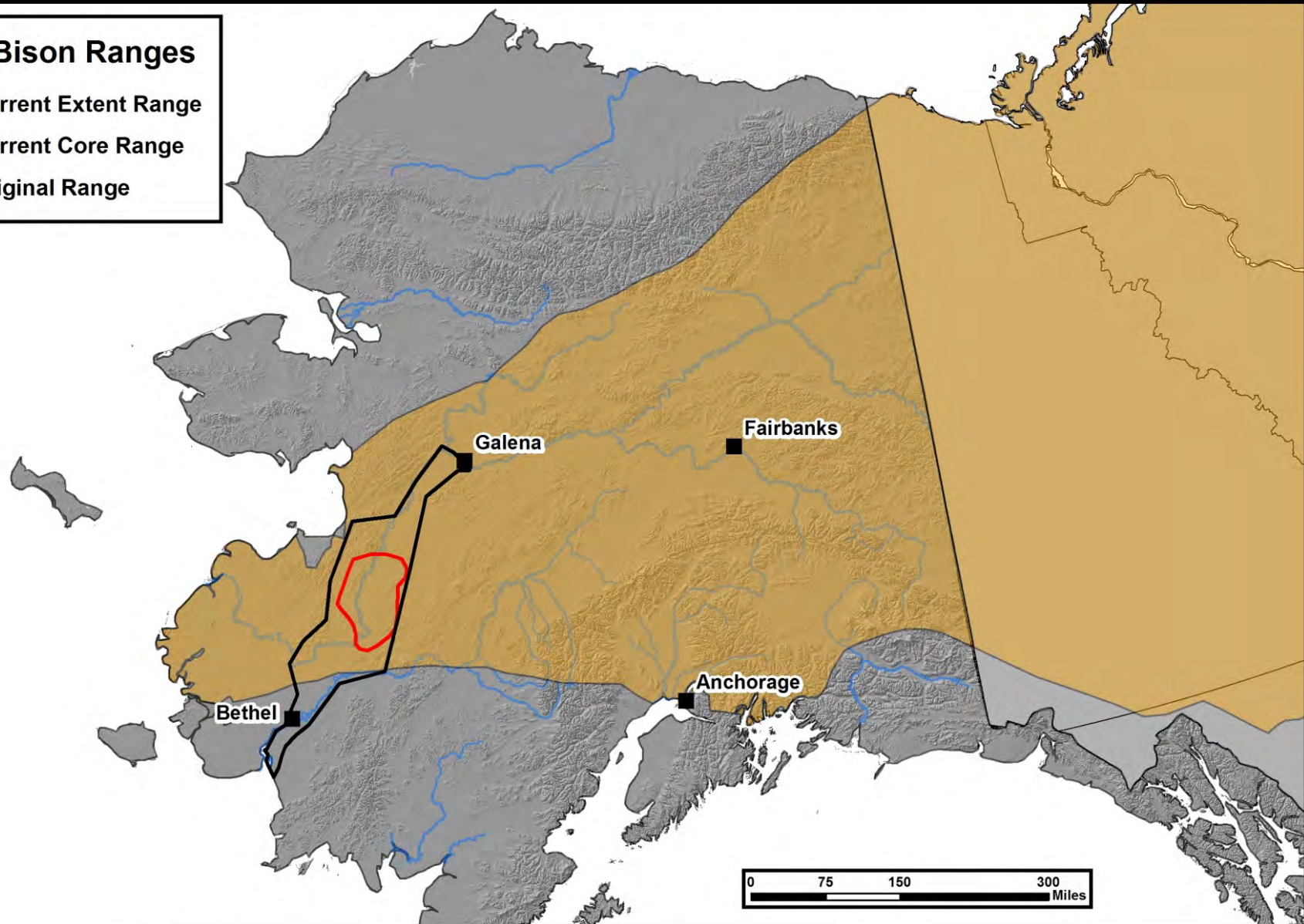
Survival and reproduction

- 130 Wood Bison released in 2015
- Approximately 138 post calving 2016
- 25 mortalities in first year
 - Making conversion from captive to wild is difficult
- No known mortalities in second year
 - No evidence of Predation, Poaching, or Disease
- **Natural Selection in action**
- 16 wild born 2015 calves
- 17 wild born 2016 calves
- Many more expected in 2017
 - Age, body condition, knowledge

Where are the Wood Bison?

Wood Bison Ranges

-  Current Extent Range
-  Current Core Range
-  Original Range



- Current Core Range: where 95% of wood bison have been in the first year since release
- Current Extent Range: all areas wood bison have explored in the first year since release
- Original Range: range prior to 1900, based on available written and oral history

- High growth rates of young
- Great body condition of adults



CHALLENGES

Communities up and down the Yukon and Kusko are asking for bison in their backyard

- We need more education and outreach so that folks can understand and become a part of restoration

We need more populations

- The safest way to restore wood bison is to create several populations that will eventually merge
- We could use AWCC bison for augmentation of Innoko/Yukon herd with more public planning



FUTURE

- Only 10K wild bison in the world. 4.5K are wood bison
 - 1/3 the number of wild Rhinos
- Alaska currently holds 10% of world's wild bison
- Alaska has enough habitat to hold 30K bison
 - Most North American bison habitat is agricultural
 - If we chose to, Alaska could have more bison than the rest of the world combined, and be the world leader in bison conservation.



Northern Bison Range NOW

- What should the future look like 200 years?



Northern Bison Range year 2200



- Total restoration or isolated, small populations?

WHY?

- Conservation of the species in its wild state
- Benefits to the citizens
 - Wildlife and Fish populations fluctuate. Food security is tied to diversity of resources
 - Harvest rate of bison is up to 4 times than higher moose & caribou.



COST : BENEFIT RATIO

- Only about \$5M spent in 25 years on wood bison restoration.
- Same as construction of one mile of paved road in Alaska
- Return is around \$290M in 50 years.
 - \$81M in meat value
 - \$205M spent on wood bison hunts
 - \$3M paid to local land owners for access
- Other benefits health, physical, emotional, social, cultural.
- Benefits will continue as long as regulated hunting and modern wildlife management exists.



A herd of five bison, including a small calf, is walking across a vast, flat, frozen expanse of water. The ice is light blue and white with some snow patches. The bison are dark brown and are moving from left to right. The foreground shows a grassy bank with some snow.

END

(Actually beginning)