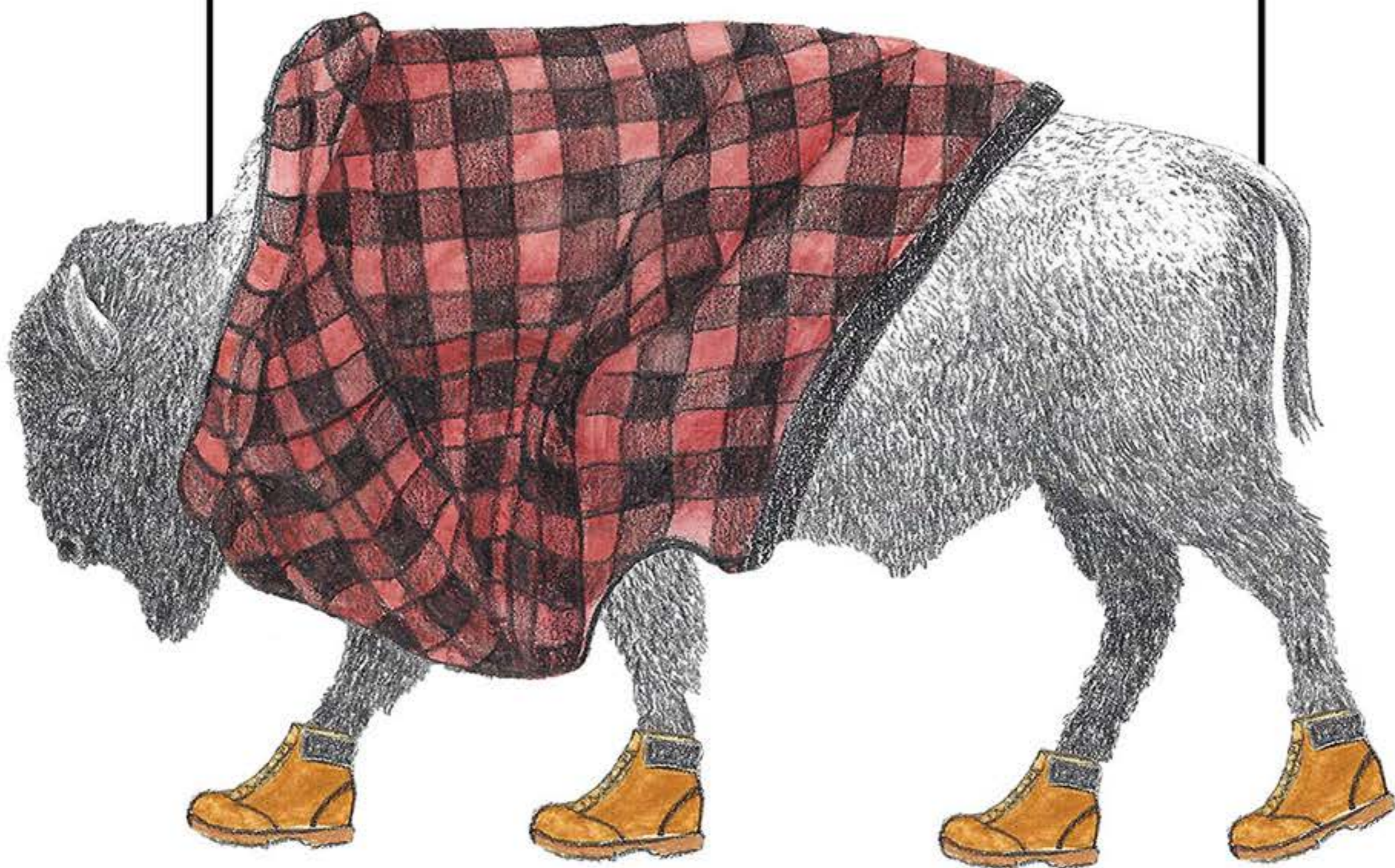




# SILVER BOW TO TARKIO

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE  
UPPER CLARK FORK RIVER BASIN  
IN A NEW WEST



CREATED BY: JO LAPORTE

# ABOUT

This project aims to introduce the histories and conditions of the Clark Fork River Basin, address connections between waste and the environment, and provide opportunities to consider a different reality. This is not a typical field guide. It highlights a few of the many stories that have made the Clark Fork River Basin what it is today, and suggests a variety of ways to interact with these stories.

# INTRODUCTION

The Clark Fork River in Montana is known for its beauty, its size, and the communities it supports. It is used by locals for fishing, swimming, rafting, kayaking, paddle-boarding, tubing, and canoeing. It provides thousands of acres of irrigation for farmers and ranchers, as well as drinking water for communities along the river. The Clark Fork River was named after William Clark, who along with Meriwether Lewis, explored the area on their expedition to the Pacific Ocean in 1805. At that time, the land was home to the Salish, Pend D Orielle, Koot-nai, and Blackfeet tribes for thousands of years. All were forced into Indian Reservations soon after.

During the 1800's, the area was colonized by Europeans and Immigrants for the prospect of minerals, furs, farmland, and a territory to claim their own. By the 1900's the landscapes surrounding the Clark Fork River were exploited and degraded. Toxic waste from mining, logging, and development, inevitably ended up in the river and continue to pose serious threats to the environment and local communities today. These transformations that have occurred have shaped a new west, leaving the Clark Fork River Basin home to the largest Superfund Complex in the United States.

# THE HISTORY OF THE CLARK FORK RIVER BASIN & THE NOT SUPER FUN SITES



# COPPPER KINGS

## MARCUS DALY & WILLIAM A. CLARK

The two fought for control over the copper mining that took place in Butte and the surrounding areas in the 1800's. The copper mining was literally powering the country at the time and both wanted to be the copper "kings". They used their wealth to out buy one another, while they tried to climb the ladder of success. In the end, it was the Clark Fork River Basin that ended up paying the price.





WEAR YOUR OWN COPPER CROWN



AS YOU WEAR THIS  
CROWN IN A NEW  
WEST, USE YOUR  
POWERS TO FIGHT  
THE WASTE AND  
PROTECT THE  
WATER

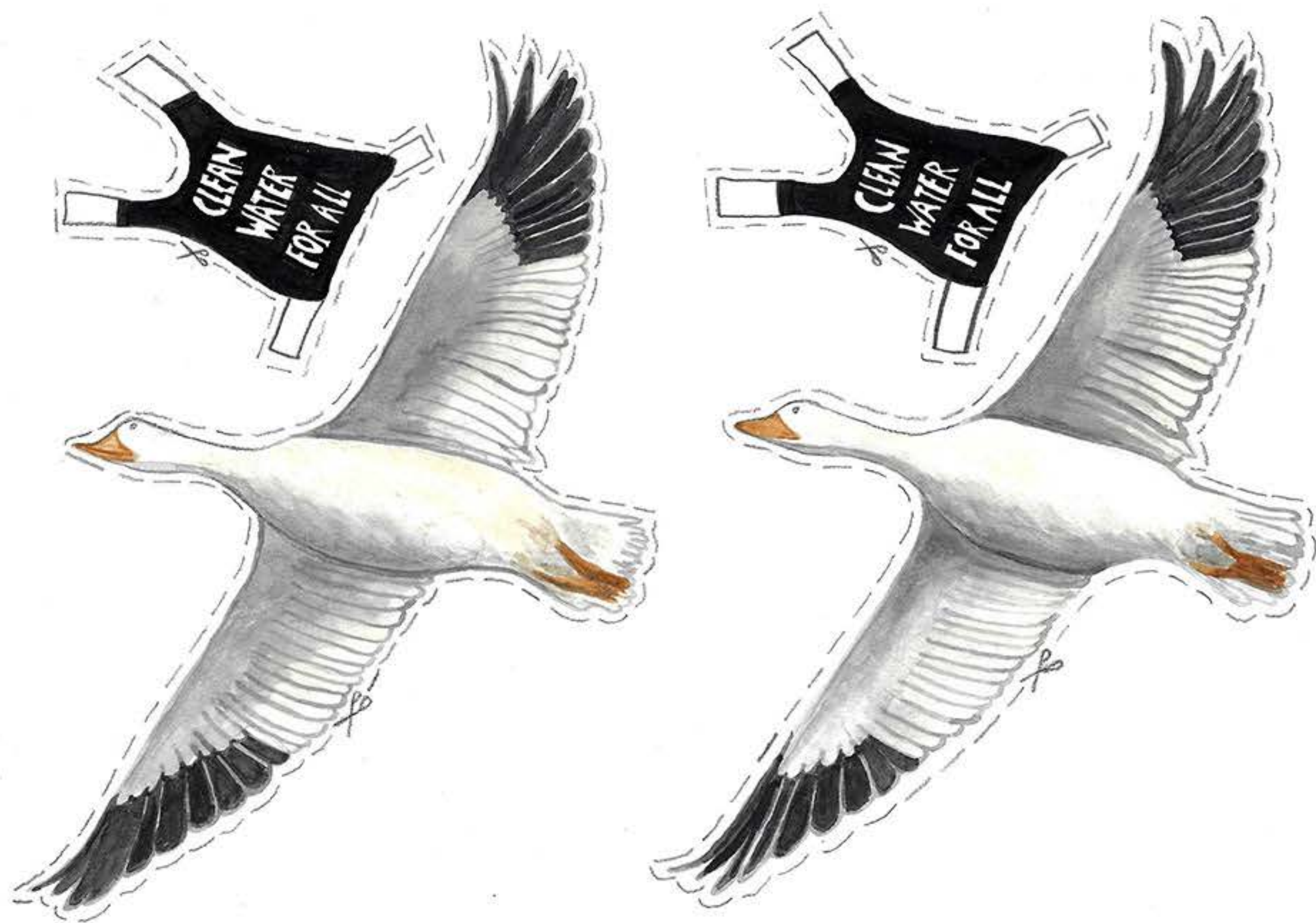


# SUPERFUND.....NOT SUPER FUN

Superfund is a federally funded program that aims to clean-up areas of hazardous waste that pose significant threats to environmental and/or human health. These sites are often abandoned mines, plants, landfills, or factories. There are more than 1,000 superfund sites in the united states. The clark fork river basin is home to the largest superfund complex in the country. Toxic waste from mining has forever scarred the landscape and continues to seep into the water. In 2016, thousands of snow geese were killed after landing in the toxic waste water of the berkley pit in Butte, Mt. The old copper mining pit has become an attraction in Butte and is open for visitors.



# FLY YOUR OWN SNOW GEESE



CUT OUT AND ATTACH TO STRING OR STICK AND LET THEM FLY!





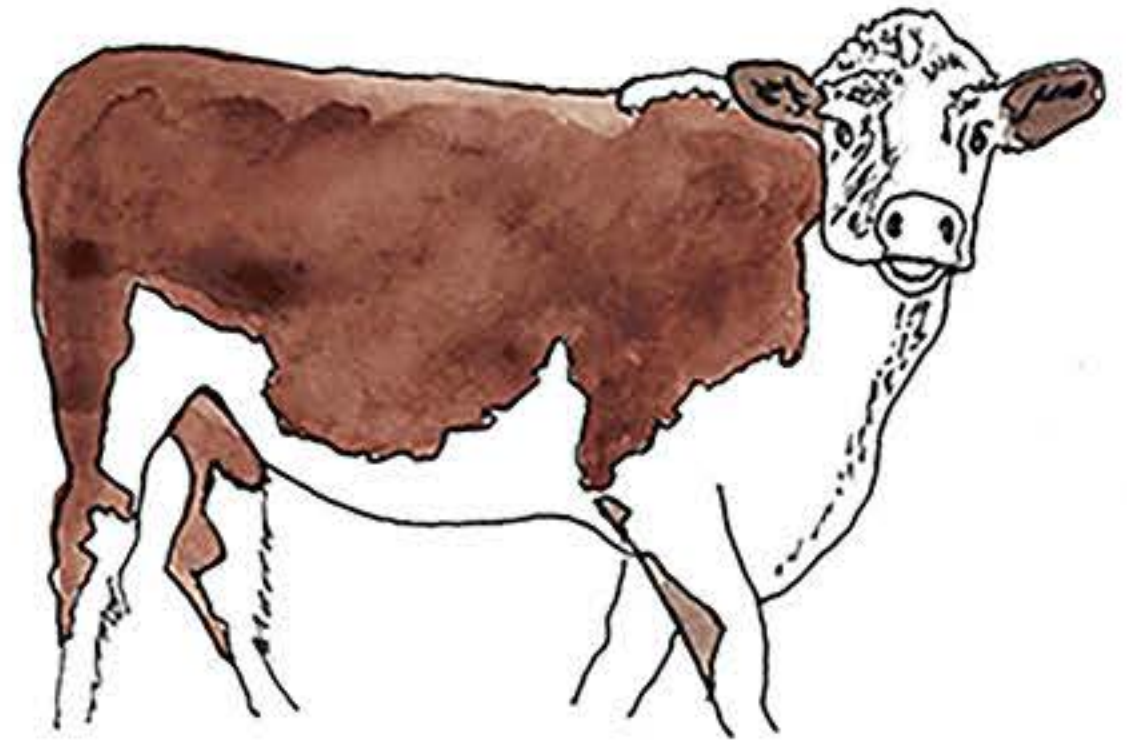
# BISON: AMERICA'S NATIONAL MAMMAL



*Bos Bison (scientific name)*

*'Q'eyq'ay (Salish and Pend d'Orielle name)*

*Bison (common name)*

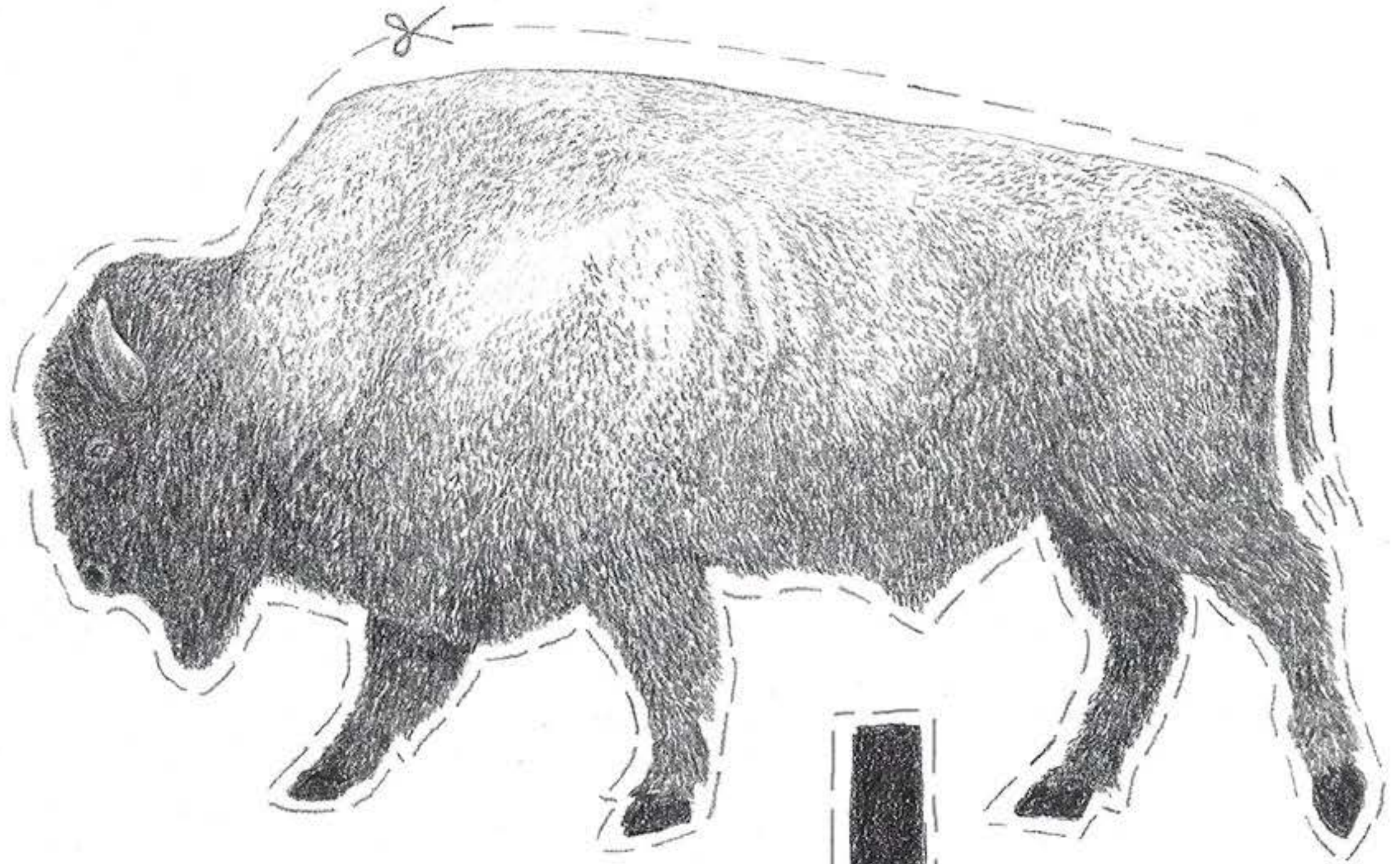


*Bos Taurus (scientific name)*

*Cattle (common name)*

Bison brought many men to the area now known as montana. Not to view them in their natural environment, like the tourists of yellowstone park, but for their furs. Millions of bison roamed free in north america before the land was colonized. As the human population spread and grew, the bison became another commodity. By the 1880's, almost all of the bison were gone. They had turned into fur coats, food, or were left to perish due to drought and loss of territory. Cattle has replaced the bison and today the clark fork river basin provides drinking water to thousands of cattle throughout the basin. Bison herds are slowly growing and can be viewed in yellowstone and other designated areas and reserves.

# OWN YOUR OWN BISON



COMES WITH  
HIPSTER  
APPAREL!!



CAREFULLY CUT OUT AND ASSEMBLE. CREATE YOUR OWN WESTERN LANDSCAPES RIGHT AT HOME!

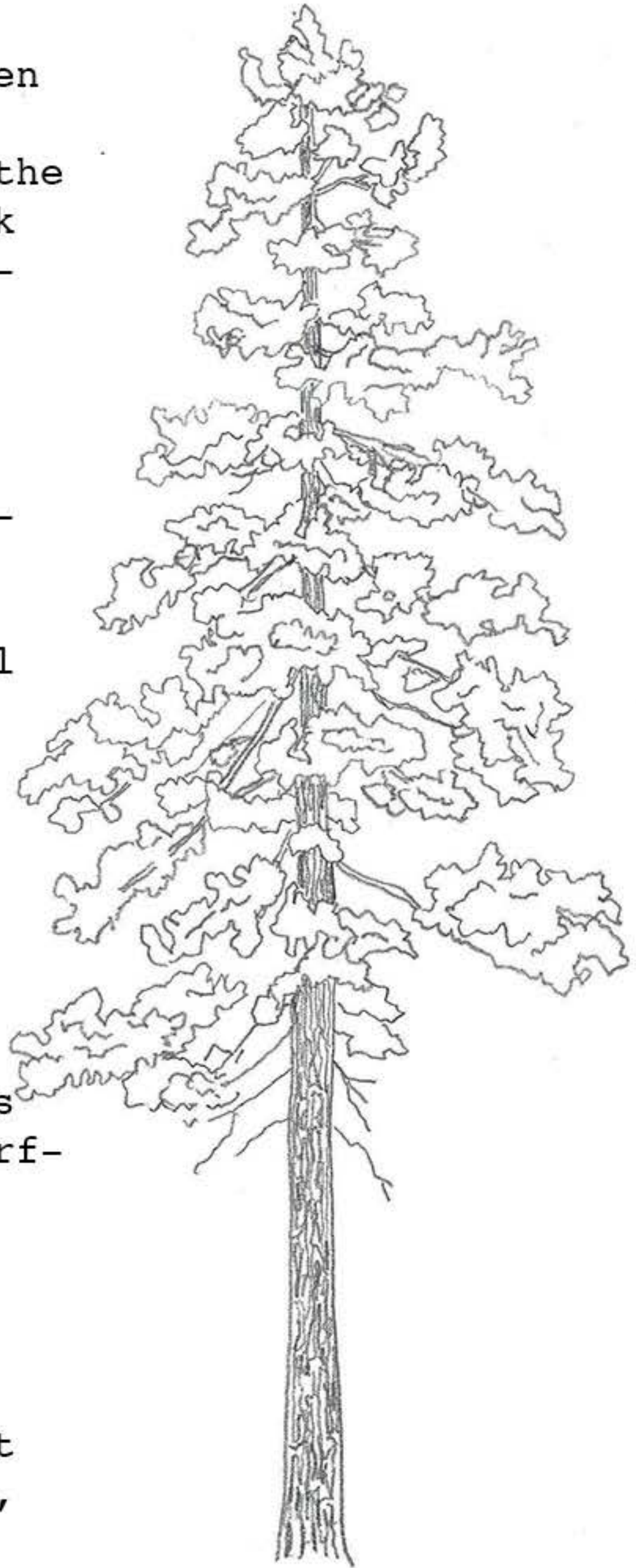
# TREES

Trees were chopped for lumber as soon as the mining began. The mining towns needed lumber for their homes, their mines, and the railroads that were needed to transport the minerals from one place to another. The mill in Bonner was so large it needed a hydropowered dam to support it and its workers. When the Clark Fork River flooded in 1908, mining waste from Butte contaminated the Bonner area and 120 miles of the Clark Fork River, leaving it the largest superfund complex in the united states.

Trees are also used to make paper and paper products such as cardboard. The Smurfit-Stone Pulp and Paper Mill outside of Frenchtown was a global paper product producer and supplied many locals with steady jobs. When the mill closed in 2010, these locals were out of jobs, and the toxic waste from the mill was abandoned and left to sit in the 3000 plus acre property. The area was also listed as a superfund site.

The Bonner mill was removed in 2008, thanks to the actions of local river stewards, and clean-up of the site has been making serious progress. The Smurfit-stone site still sits, awaiting clean-up, threatening the clark fork river, which flows within feet of the toxic waste ponds.

The trees, however, have been left out of the conversation, which is too bad, since it is safe to assume that trees place a high value on clean water.



PONDEROSA PINE

*pinus ponderosa*

# SUGGESTED ACTIVITY:

## TALK TO A TREE

### **Here are 7 steps for having an awkward conversation with a tree**

If you are ready to have that conversation, like I was, it's good to be prepared and know what you want to say. Here are some tips for making this conversation a bit less awkward.

**1. Introduce yourself.** Even if you do not speak the same language, call yourself by name and let the Tree know that you are engaging in conversation.

**2. Compliment them.** Tell them how nice they look or thank them for all of the oxygen, shade, or shelter they have provided for you and your species or for the habitat they have provided for other species. Maybe thank them for the paper, wood, medicine, gum, sponges, wax, syrup, or rubber they have provided, it depends on who you're talking to. These are just some suggestions.

**3. Be sure to listen after you talk.... this is a conversation.**

**4. Feel free to ask them questions,** they have a different understanding of the world and have seen things much differently. They may be several hundred years older than you. Speak slowly and clearly.

\*Potential questions might be.....

- So what do you think of all of the changes that have occurred around here?

- How about this climate changing? How are you adapting?

- What do you think of other tree species that have been brought over from other countries? Do they take over your habitat? Do you get along?

- Do you like humans?

**5. Listen for answers.**

**6. An awkward apology-** This is optional but encouraged. This would be a good time to apologize for never having this conversation before, and for taking the tree for granted. It might sound a bit like this.....

\* Jeez, I'm sorry for never trying to talk before. I'm sorry that there aren't as many of you around anymore. I bet you feel alone, threatened, or taken advantage of. You still look really strong, if it makes you feel any better. Anyway, you have really been a big help for us. I wish that we could have had this conversation earlier, when things were, ya know, a bit less awkward (an apology always goes well when you add a compliment to it).

**7. Listen.** Thank them for talking to you. Say your goodbyes.

Congratulations! you have just had your first awkward conversation with a tree



# ABOUT JO LAPORTE

Jo LaPorte is an artist, art educator, and adventurer living in Montana. She considers herself a place-based artist, using the stories of her surroundings to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between humans and the earth. Through her projects, she hopes to provide people with different tools to connect to their local resources, histories, and landscapes.

