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January 5, 2017

The Honorable Dan Ashe
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

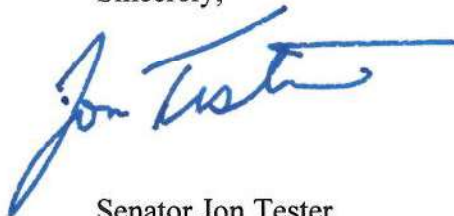
I write today at the request of Montanans and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (CSKT) regarding the management model of the National Bison Range in my state. This range is an important wildlife refuge that preserves our national mammal and provides valuable recreational and educational opportunities to the public.

I understand that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), local stakeholders and the CSKT have been in discussions regarding a proposal that would return management authority of the National Bison Range to the CSKT. As a result, there have been numerous questions from various stakeholders throughout Montana.

Due to this public interest, CSKT held an open meeting on July 12, 2016, where they solicited public input on a draft legislative proposal that would allow tribal management of the National Bison Range. While I am a strong supporter of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, I am still in the process of evaluating the intricacies of this issue and gathering feedback from Montanans. I firmly believe that any such proposal needs to ensure the public does not lose any access to our public lands. As part of this review, I would like to know if there are any thoughts the FWS would like to share on the proposal. It would be important to receive this information before determining what steps, if any, should be made regarding stewardship of the National Bison Range.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Senator Jon Tester

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