

FIVE VALLEYS AUDUBON SOCIETY

**P.O. BOX 8425
MISSOULA, MT 59807**



23 January 2017

Mr. Vernon Finley, Chairman
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855

Re: Comments on Draft Legislation to Restore the National Bison Range to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Dear Chairman Finley,

The Board of the Five Valleys Audubon Society, Missoula, MT has reviewed the Draft Legislation to Restore the National Bison Range to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and has voted unanimously to support this proposal. We recognize the Tribes' cultural and historical connection to bison and to the lands of the Bison Range—which are wholly located within the Flathead Reservation. We also acknowledge the expertise the Tribes' have demonstrated in wildlife management and endangered and threatened species recovery.

Our Chapter appreciates the varied habitats, wildlife, and bird species supported on Tribal lands. We annually visit these areas during field trips, to help others enjoy the wildlife and appreciate the rich natural resources of the Mission Valley. In addition, our Chapter has deep ties cooperating with local refuge management, and in fact we participated in the 'adopt a refuge program' at Ninepipe Refuge during the 1980s. We also have helped secure past Land Water and Conservation funding for nearby Waterfowl Production Areas. In that spirit, our Chapter would like to offer our continued volunteer support, if that would be helpful, in such activities as bird surveys or winter raptor counts, for example.

We are pleased that the transfer stipulates continued public access at the Bison Range, and that the transfer in no way could be construed as setting a precedent for relinquishing management other federal lands.

Thank you for your continued commitment to science-based wildlife and habitat management.

With kindest regards,

Rosemary H Leach

Rosemary H. Leach
President, Five Valleys Audubon Society