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November 26, 2016

To: Bison Range Working Group
Subject: Transfer of National Bison Range

Flathead Audubon Society's Board of Directors has voted to support proposed legislation to transfer the National Bison Range to trust management by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. We recognize the history, culture and ecological stewardship of the Tribes upon the land of the current National Bison Range. We believe that under the competent management of the Tribes' Natural Resource department, the Bison Range and its bison herd will flourish for generations present and future.

Flathead Audubon members, their families and friends have for many years spent time bird and wildlife watching on the Bison Range. We applaud the Working Group's inclusion in the proposed bill of strong language establishing and supporting continued public access. Also, a major tenet of Flathead Audubon's existence has always been education. We have been pleased to learn that the Tribes have a similar interest in promoting education and experiential learning on the Bison Range.

Change is usually uncomfortable at first, and perfection is a goal, not an absolute. The performance of the federal managers is not at issue in this transfer. Most individuals, tribal and non-tribal, who associate with the Bison Range in any way, are aware right now of problems that need to be fixed, adjustments that need to be made, and potentials not yet recognized. We have a realistic respect and belief that the Tribes are prepared to address the needs of the land.

In February of 2008, Flathead Audubon presented Dale Becker and the CSKT Wildlife Management department with our Conservation Achievement Recognition, for providing a successful, positive conservation example to others. Over the years, we have admired and appreciated Dale and his crews' successes, including the restoration of Trumpeter Swan, Peregrine Falcon, Northern Leopard Frog, and Bighorn Sheep populations. It is our belief that there is no greater measure of intent than one's previous good works. These successes are the real basis of our faith in the continued thoughtful and careful management the Tribes will give to the Bison Range, for our generation and many more in the future.

Thank you for allowing comment on this important issue.

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