



Nez Perce

TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

P.O. BOX 305 • LAPWAI, IDAHO 83540 • (208) 843-2253

January 24, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Finley:

The Nez Perce Tribe would like express its unconditional support for the restoration of the National Bison Range (Range) to federal trust ownership for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). The history and circumstances surrounding the Range make it a unique and important candidate for federal trust ownership.

The Nez Perce Tribe recognizes that the CSKT possess a deep and abiding cultural connection to the 30 to 75 million bison that once roamed North America. It is this connection that spurred members of the CSKT to work to save bison from extinction in the 1870s and to preserve hundreds of bison on the Flathead Indian Reservation (Reservation) until the early 1900s. It was then that the U.S. Government allotted the Reservation and created the Range within the Reservation's exterior boundaries. In doing so, the U.S. Government dispossessed the CSKT of much of the land upon which its bison had freely roamed and unlawfully took for itself 18,523.85 acres of the Reservation for its own bison range.¹

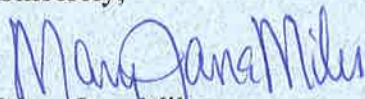
The CSKT has fought hard to maintain its cultural and physical connection to bison over the last century. In doing so, it has demonstrated its leadership in the realm of bison conservation in many ways, including by participating in the Interagency Bison Management Plan alongside the Nez Perce Tribe.

Due to the nature and location of the Range, the U.S. Government has before it a unique and historic opportunity to restore the Range to federal trust status for the Salish and Kootenai people and guarantee continued bison conservation and public access. The Nez Perce Tribe urges

¹ Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of Flathead Reservation, Mont. v. United States, 437 F.2d 458, 474 (Ct. Cl. 1971).

representatives of the U.S. Government and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to pursue whatever means necessary to restore the Range to the CSKT.

Sincerely,



Mary Jane Miles
Chairman