



July 1, 2020

Senator John Hoeven, Chairman
Senator Tom Udall, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for S. 3019 Montana Water Rights Protection Act, hearing date June 24th, 2020

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Vice Chairman Udall:

On behalf of Montana Wilderness Association, we write to support Senate Bill 3019, the Montana Water Rights Protection Act, jointly introduced by Montana Senators Steve Daines and Jon Tester. The legislation would resolve more than a century of federal mismanagement of Tribes' water resources, contribute to tribal economic development, and provide security to water users on and off the reservation.

The legislation also restores federal trust ownership of the National Bison Range for the benefit of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, which we also strongly support. Given the historical circumstances surrounding these lands, we believe this restoration is just and supports tribal sovereignty. As described in the bill, the lands that currently compose the National Bison Range were taken from the Tribes without consent. The bill is explicit in requiring continued conservation of the land and wildlife as well as public access. The Tribes have consistently demonstrated their commitment to conservation over the years, establishing the nation's first Tribal Wilderness in the Mission Mountains and restoring threatened and endangered species to their lands. This restoration of lands into federal trust is in response to a very unique set of historical circumstances, and will not set a precedent for any other federal lands.

For these reasons, Montana Wilderness supports S. 3019 and urges the committee to advance it. We also request that this letter is included in the June 24, 2020 hearing record for S. 3019.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BG", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ben Gabriel
executive director
Montana Wilderness Association