



June 23, 2020

Chairman John Hoevan
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Vice-Chairman Tom Udall
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2051

Dear Chairman Hoevan and Vice Chairman Udall:

On behalf of Sierra Club's more than 4 million members and supporters, I am writing to express our strong support for The Montana Water Rights Protection Act, S. 3019. In addition to settling Tribal water rights, the Act would authorize, and pay for, remediation and restoration projects for damaged waterways and riparian habitats on the Flathead Indian Reservation. It will also improve in-stream flows for fish. Finally, these projects will create jobs, all the more important in the current economic landscape.

The Sierra Club has a long-standing history of working with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) on wildlife and conservation issues. We respect the Tribes' cultural and historical connection to bison and that the National Bison Range (NBR) lies wholly within the Flathead Indian Reservation, on lands appropriated from the Tribes by the U.S. Government with minimal compensation.

Given the history of these lands, the Sierra Club affirms the restoration of The National Bison Range and its bison to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for the purpose of bison conservation and ensuring the long-term health of the NBR bison.

Although Sierra Club vehemently opposes the transfer of federal public lands to states, this provision is uniquely suited to restore the wrongfully acquired land and bison of the CSKT back to the Flathead Indian Reservation and affirms the cultural and historical connections to the bison and the relationship to wildlife and the land which was held in time in memoriam. The support for the CSKT and the National Bison Range will not be interpreted as a precedent for any other suggested land transfer, property, or facility but will be recognized as a restoration of lands and wildlife under the care of the Flathead Indian Reservation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The Sierra Club offers our full support in restoring the land and bison to its rightful caretakers and stewards, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Flathead Indian Reservation, as outlined in this legislation. We look forward to working with the committee to help advance the legislation forward.

Sincerely,
Kirin Kennedy
Deputy Legislative Director
Lands and Wildlife
Sierra Club