

# United States Senate

October 13, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 2250

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Tidwell  
Chief  
United States Forest Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Neil Kornze  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street NW, Rm. 5665  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Secretary Jewell, Chief Tidwell and Director Kornze:

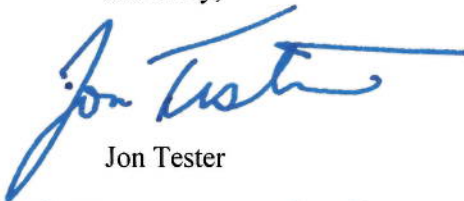
As you know, a broad coalition of Montanans is working to protect the northern gateway to Yellowstone National Park from proposed industrial mining activity. Based on this strong local support, I am considering introducing legislation to permanently withdraw two small areas of Federal lands north of Yellowstone from mining and mineral leasing laws. Today, I am writing to encourage you to take the necessary steps to prepare an administrative withdrawal and allow for public comment before the end of this year.

Mining has long played an important role in Montana's history and our economy, but there are some places where it simply isn't appropriate. The doorstep of Yellowstone, which was established as our first national park 144 years ago, is one of those places. The approximately 31,400 acres of public lands proposed for withdrawal adjacent to Yellowstone and the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness in the Custer Gallatin National Forest deserve special consideration because of their unique character, exceptional beauty, and ecological value.

The local economy in the Paradise Valley and Gardiner Basin is diverse and thriving due to the quality of life, opportunities for world-class fishing and other outdoor recreation, and the millions of visitors that Yellowstone draws through these communities every year. The prospect of large-scale mining operations threatens the unique nature of this area and the livelihoods of the people who live there. Over the past year, I have heard overwhelming opposition from folks throughout the region to these projects proposed by foreign mining companies. More than 250 businesses, as well as numerous local government officials, sportsmen's and conservation groups, and landowners have told me that mining in the Emigrant and Jardine areas will harm the region's economy and our outdoor heritage. I stand with them in seeking to protect these areas.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and your assistance. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester