

United States Senate

January 5, 2023

Chief Randy Moore
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Chief Moore:

I write today to urge the Forest Service to swiftly utilize funding from the recently-passed Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 to address damage caused by this summer's flooding in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest.

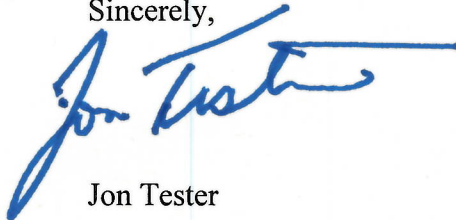
Last summer, historic flooding along the Yellowstone River and its tributaries affected large areas of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. Both in the immediate aftermath of the flooding and in the months since, Forest Service staff worked diligently to use available resources to address damage to habitat, critical infrastructure, and recreation sites throughout the Forest. However, after consulting with both forest users and members of the Forest Service, it's clear that the Custer-Gallatin Forest has significant unmet needs stemming from this summer's flooding.

Homeowners along East Rosebud Creek worked with the Forest Service and hired engineers to help find solutions to repair damage and prevent future disaster. Near the trailhead to Montana's highest peak, in one of the most heavily visited areas in Region 1, a creek changed channels on public lands and flowed through homes and bypassed a critical headwaters lake. Without mitigation, this will likely repeat. Smart, timely investments now will protect those resources and replace miles of lost road with more resilient recreation infrastructure in this drainage. Additionally, the Custer-Gallatin National Forest is a destination for visitors from around the world, making it a major economic driver in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

On December 22, I joined my colleagues in passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, which included \$360 million for the Forest Service to respond to natural disasters like the flooding in the Yellowstone River watershed. Specifically, the omnibus funding package included \$210 million for watershed restoration, critical habitat, and public access and \$150 million for capital improvements, such as repairing roads. I worked closely with my colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee to include this language so that your agency would have the resources necessary to address the outstanding work that is still needed to respond to this summer's disaster.

I appreciate your agency's continued efforts to address the impacts of this year's historic flooding, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that these additional resources are rolled out quickly and effectively.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jon Tester