

June 23, 2023



The Honorable Jon Tester
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

The Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA) would like to thank you for your leadership and perseverance in negotiating a framework for the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) Water Settlement Act of 2023 in Congress.

Fort Belknap Indian Community will be the last settlement in Montana to ensure that historical water use by all water users on and off the reservation are protected. The success of Montana's agriculture industry is dependent upon water and water right certainty. It is easily the single most important resource for people across Montana, which is why MSGA supports this agreement.

The long-term economic impact and improved critical infrastructure this water settlement will provide will make significant improvements to irrigation systems, as well as provide certainty to tribal, agricultural, residential and business water users. Specifically, the \$275 million to fully rehabilitate and restore the St. Mary Canal to its full capacity will have a positive impact on ranchers across the Hi-Line and will create a sustainable water supply for the Milk River.

Additionally, the Act affirms Montanans' Constitutional protection that the water of the State of Montana belongs to all the people for their common benefit (Article IX, Section 3), it will prevent years of costly litigation for Montana water users, and provide much needed certainty for all parties involved.

MSGA applauds the bi-partisan effort and we look forward to the passage and implementation of this Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raylee A. Honeycutt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raylee A. Honeycutt
Executive Vice President | Montana Stockgrowers Association