

Valley County
501 Court Square, #1
Glasgow, MT 59230

Phone: (406)228-6219
Fax: (406)228-9027
vccomm@valleycountymt.gov
John Fahlgren, Member

Paul Tweten, Member

Mary Armstrong, Chairman

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

May 3, 2023

2023 MAY 12 PM 3:38

RE: Support the Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act

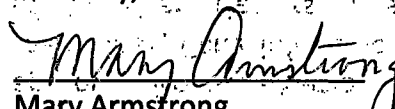
Dear Senator Tester,

We support the "Gros Venture and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act of 2023" (Settlement Act) that will provide very important infrastructure funding that will benefit the Milk River Project and state water users across the Hi-Line.

We understand that the FBIC leadership has made a difficult decision to remove the transfer of the Grinnell Lands from the Settlement Bill, which had created a barrier to the Settlement Act's approval. Now, the Settlement Act includes significant funding that supports the restoration of the St. Mary Canal infrastructure vital to improving the water supply in the Milk River in support of Milk River irrigators. This project will provide protection for our current Milk River water users as the FBIC obtains funds under the Settlement Act for its water infrastructure projects that will allow the development and use of FBIC's Indian water rights secured by a decade of negotiations resulting in the 2001 F. Belknap-Montana Water Compact.

The Settlement Act is a win-win for the State and water users along the Hi-Line and for the FBIC. It will provide critical support for our agricultural economy and have long-term economic benefits throughout our region. It will at long last provide certainty to our irrigators related to their water rights. We support the 2023 Water settlement Bill and encourage your support in ensuring its passage in Congress.

Sincerely,


Mary Armstrong
Valley County Commission Chair

Cc: President Neff Stiffarm (via email: Jeffrey.stiffarm@ftbelknap.orf)
Kristal Fox, FBIC Water Administrator (via email: kristalfox78@gmail.com)