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United States Senate

October 18, 2016

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
Department of the Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Darcy:

I am writing to request that you work with the State of Montana, as well as local officials and organizations to identify opportunities to bolster the resiliency of the Yellowstone River and its tributaries. The health of the Yellowstone River is critically important to Montana's thriving outdoor economy and our quality of life.

In August, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks took the unprecedented step of closing 183 miles of the Yellowstone River and tributaries to fishing, rafting, and other recreation in response to a large-scale fish kill. More than 4,000 dead mountain whitefish as well as small numbers of other fish species were documented, and estimates of the total mortality run into the tens of thousands. Local businesses, including fishing guides, rafting companies, hotels, and restaurants lost substantial income during the busy final weeks of the summer season, and Montana Governor Steve Bullock declared an emergency to free up resources for workers and businesses affected by the river's closure.

The Yellowstone River has been experiencing near record low flows and high temperatures, which stress fish populations and exacerbate the impacts of a parasite that causes proliferative kidney disease. As we see these very real impacts of climate change, I stand ready to work with the Corps on projects to increase the overall health and resiliency of the Yellowstone River.

Accordingly, I request that you consider initiating studies or projects under existing authorities outlined in Section 4007 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014, Section 3110 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, and Section 206 aquatic ecosystem restoration within your Continuing Authorities Program. These authorizations aim to support efforts to enhance natural riverine processes, protect riparian areas, restore instream flows, and achieve other ecosystem restoration benefits that help mitigate extreme weather events in the Yellowstone and its tributaries. If there are regulatory, statutory or other obstacles to implementing projects under these authorities, please let me know.

Though the river has reopened, it is critical that we work to enhance the long-term health and resilience of this important river and its tributaries. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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