

United States Senate

September 6, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

I am writing to request that the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (S. 507) be included in a legislative hearing as soon as the Committee's schedule allows. Montanans have spent over a decade crafting the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project to improve forest management in the Lolo National Forest. It is past time we moved forward with this responsible forest management proposal, which has garnered the support of outfitters, timber companies, local government, and recreational users from all walks of life.

Montanans worked together to craft a broad-based proposal called the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Project to support local jobs and preserve their way of life. This proposal included the Southwest Crown of the Continent Collaborative (SWCC), as well as many of the recreation and conservation provisions which I ultimately introduced as part of this bill. The SWCC has succeeded in stimulating the local economy, supporting timber jobs, and providing a united front in support of responsible timber harvest in the area by bringing together community and forestry partners to plan responsible timber restoration work. However, the SWCC is only one part of the Project, just as timber harvest is one of many uses for our national forests. This collaborative is not resigned to letting the other pieces of their proposal idle in Congress and neither am I. In order to make good on this ground-up proposal, additional legislative action to meet its remaining goals, including a new wilderness area designation, and designations that allow easier access for snowmobilers and mountain bikers in specific sections of Lolo National Forest. That's just what the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act does.

With a \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation economy, Montanans know that recreational opportunities are a critical part of my state's budget and heritage. By creating new recreational areas and rewarding hard work on collaborative, multi-use proposals, we can support local involvement in forest management, and support the rural communities that rely on our public lands. My legislation also requires the Forest Service to identify restoration actions needed to support the health and recovery of this area. In a state where more than 900,000 acres have burned in wildfires this year alone, that restoration work is a critical part of forest management.

As leaders on the Committee, you are posed with the challenging task of spearheading the discussion on public land management. I thank you for your consideration of our legislation, and eagerly await the opportunity to add this made-in-Montana proposal to the conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.