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# United States Senate

October 3, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

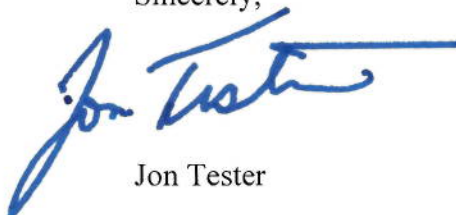
I am writing to ask you to support protecting 30,000 acres of public lands just north of Yellowstone National Park. This week, the Senate advanced bipartisan legislation to permanently protect the area, but until that law is in effect, the area remains at risk. I urge you to approve the temporary administrative withdrawal that is now before you as a safeguard until Congress enacts permanent protection for the Paradise Valley.

Two years ago, the Park County community spoke up about the prospect of largescale mineral development on public lands the doorstep of Yellowstone. These towns and businesses are critical parts of Montana's \$7.1 billion outdoor recreation economy, and they rely on clean water, scenic landscapes, and thriving wildlife. While mining plays an important role in our state's history and economy, there are some places where it doesn't make sense. That's why I introduced legislation to permanently withdraw mineral rights on 30,000 acres of federal land, leaving existing rights and private property intact. My legislation this week passed out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support, and the House version has passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee, also with bipartisan support. Congress is close to passing permanent protection for the area. But the clock is ticking.

While I have been pursuing a permanent legislative fix for Park County, your Department has been working with the Forest Service on a 20-year administrative withdrawal. Since November of 2016, the lands in question have been under a mineral segregation, which expires next month. It is critical that you act to put the administrative withdrawal in place before the mineral segregation expires. Protection for these lands must be continuous, as there has been significant pressure to develop the area since 2016. The Forest Service has completed and transmitted its final Environmental Assessment to your Department, leaving the door open for you to approve this temporary withdrawal. I ask that you do so immediately. We must work together to ensure that this breathtaking area is still protected at the end of the next month, and at the end of the next century.

Thank you for your continued support for protecting this critical area. I look forward to working with you to make sure these lands are still available for future generations to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

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