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# United States Senate

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independent Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20228

Secretary Perdue:

I write regarding the recent agreement between the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to provide public river access by way of the Fort Keogh ARS station in Miles City, Montana. I urge you to swiftly accept this proposal and allow responsible recreation on the Yellowstone River to resume.

For decades, ARS allowed the public to access a boat launch site on the Yellowstone River at its expansive research facility near Miles City, Montana. This ended a few years ago after ARS property was damaged, and the station was closed to public access. The community was understandably frustrated, because the site was one of only a few ways to access the river for fishing. In Montana, outdoor access is a way of life, and the federal government should work to support that objective instead of creating unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.

Providing river access at this location is widely supported. ARS, community partners, and my office have worked for years to reopen the site. Further, the Senate overwhelmingly passed my amendment to the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture Appropriation funding bill that expanded ARS' authority to provide public access at federal facilities. That's why I am pleased that after much negotiation, the ARS and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks staff reached an agreement to cut red tape and allow public access at Fort Keogh. State government stepping up to provide a workable solution to a federal problem is a great example of intergovernmental cooperation that should be encouraged.

I urge you to accept the Fort Keogh agreement as soon as possible. This proposal will allow folks to responsibly enjoy the Yellowstone River, and puts common sense above bureaucracy. I appreciate your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Jon Tester

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