

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary, the Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC, 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the majority of counties in northeast Montana are experiencing historic, extreme drought conditions threatening the livelihood of rural communities and devastating agricultural operations. We respectfully urge you to immediately allow livestock grazing to be permitted on retired grazing allotments within the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge (CMR) to mitigate hardships felt by ranchers due to the drought.

While 88% of Montana is currently experiencing abnormal dryness or drought, the northeast portion of the State has been hit the hardest. Drought has devastated our rangelands which are no longer able to produce the forage needed to sustain ranching operations and in some circumstances, displacing livestock altogether. In similar circumstances in 2017 following the Lodgepole Complex Wildfire, the Department of the Interior agreed to grant permission to graze livestock on retired allotments within the CMR. This provided an opportunity for displaced livestock to forage in areas previously permitted for grazing without compromising other uses or environmental considerations on the Refuge. This can and should be pursued once again to provide flexibility, alternative options, and relief for ranchers suffering at the hands of the drought.

Granting permission to move cattle on retired grazing allotments within the CMR is a win for our ranchers and our landscapes. Thank you for your consideration of this request and we look forward to partnering with you to assist Montanans during this challenging season.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Matthew Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress

CC: Ms. Martha Williams, Principal Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mr. Paul Santavy, Project Leader, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge Complex