

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2017

The Honorable Jim Kurth
Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Kurth:

We are writing to advise you of our strong support for the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project managed by the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and urge continued funding from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund. First, thank you for the support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in awarding the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project \$2 Million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and for your previous support in the region including \$2 Million for the Trumbull Creek Project and \$2 Million for the Haskill Basin Project. Continued investment in this area will build on the USFWS and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) combined investments from previous years. This investment will further help conserve the outdoor way of life in the Whitefish area, protect critical investments in water quality for the City of Whitefish, secure working forests, and protect habitat important to many of Montana's iconic wildlife species.

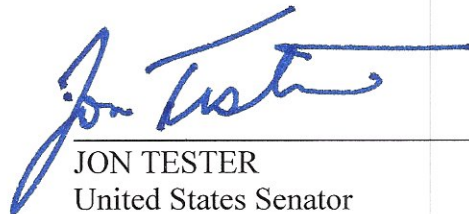
The FY 2016 request furthered this effort by helping leverage funds for the conservation of the nearby Stillwater lands owned by the Weyerhaeuser Company. This remarkable 13,000-acre property hosts the same array of fish and wildlife species that merited the Service's previous investments in this area, including the Bull Trout, Canada Lynx and the Grizzly Bear. Likewise, their scenic value, watershed importance (with key drainages into Whitefish Lake itself), and significance to public recreation cannot be overstated. The USFS has ranked this project among its highest national priorities for the Forest Legacy Program for FY 2017, including \$7 million in its FY 2017 budget for the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project, just as it had done for nearby Haskill Basin and Trumbull Creek in previous fiscal years.

As the USFWS reviews the proposals for funding for FY 2017 and FY 2018, we hope you will recognize the surpassing value of continued investment in this area and prioritize the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project. We thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



JON TESTER
United States Senator