

# Fort Belknap Indian Community

EXHIBIT 9  
DATE 2/17/05  
HB 635



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Fort Belknap Indian Community  
(Tribal Govt.)  
Fort Belknap Indian Community  
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and  
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre  
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

## Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District

February 16, 2005

TO: Representative Windy Boy  
FR: Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District  
RE: HB NO. 635

Dear Mr. Windy Boy,

The Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District is submitting this letter of support for House Bill NO. 635. The Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District would like to see this bill passed in order for Tribes to be involved in a number of issues addressed in the bill. We feel that there is a unique relationship between the Federal, State and Tribal governments, which require specific language in this bill to be brought forth. The new language of consultation in the bill requires that at least once a year, the supervisors of a conservation district whose boundaries are contiguous to the boundaries of a tribal conservation district shall meet with the supervisors of the tribal conservation district to discuss mutual concerns. In addition to consultation, the Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District would like to be recognized by the State as a distinct Tribal District. We believe that we should have the same opportunities and public voice as that of a Montana conservation district organization. A great concern that we are experiencing now is that, monies were allocated for Montana Conservation Districts, which included

Tribes, but there are concerns that the resources were not distributed equally between the county and tribal ranchers. The forming of Tribal Districts may appear to be a threat to those who do not understand that Tribal Districts are there to assist Tribal farmers and ranchers to protect and preserve their Tribal lands and their cultures. The Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District has assisted tribal farmers and ranchers in preparing contracts worth over a \$1million dollars that involved conservation practices such as irrigation, livestock water, fences, and grass plantings.

The Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District's Constitution and By Laws states the purpose of the district shall be to improve the conservation and development of the natural resources and improve the quality of life within the Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District. The Tribal District also believes that there is a need to create awareness in all people of the urgency and need for the orderly development and conservation of the natural resources and quality of life on the Fort Belknap Reservation. This Bill supports all of Montana Tribes unique interest in their conservation of their respective Tribal Conservation Districts and Tribal Lands.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Hawley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Janice Hawley, Vice Chairman Fort Belknap Tribal Conservation District