



Flathead Basin Commission

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Legislative Finance Committee
Oct. 4, 2017
Exhibit 10

Patrick Holmes, Natural Resources Advr
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Tom Bell, Regional Manager
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Lake County Commissioner

Chas Cartwright
Governor Appointed Member
Columbia Falls, MT

Jasmine Courville-Brown
Governor Appointed Member
Ronan, MT

Julie Dalsoglio, Office Director
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Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes

Phil Mitchell
Flathead County Commissioner

Mark Bostrom, Administrator
Montana DNRC

Tim Davis, Administrator
Montana DEQ

Jan Metzmaker
Governor Appointed Member
Whitefish, MT

Jeff Mow, Superintendent
Glacier National Park

Dennis Philmon, Superintendent
Hungry Horse Dam
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Jack Potter
Governor Appointed Member
Columbia Falls, MT

Mark D. Reller, Montana Liaison
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Jim Williams, Supervisor
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Jim Simpson, Supervisor
Lake County Conservation Dist.

Dean Sirucek
Flathead County Conservation Dist.

Thompson Smith, Chair
Governor Appointed Member
Charlo, MT

Chip Weber, Supervisor
Flathead National Forest

October 4, 2017

Ms. Nancy Ballance Chair and the Legislative Finance Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of Continued FBC Funding

Good morning, Chair Ballance and members of the legislative finance committee. My name is Caryn Miske, and I have served as the Executive Director of the Flathead Basin Commission for over 11 years. You have heard from many of my colleagues today about the mission and importance of the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC). Based upon our legislative mandate, the FBC was created to protect the waters that flow into, and out of, the Flathead Basin. The legislature, in its wisdom, recognized that the FBC was not just a single mission agency. Instead the legislature recognized the importance of safeguarding the resources of the Flathead from myriad threats as they arise over time. If this was not the case, the mission of the FBC would have read, "protect the Flathead from the threat of mining in British Columbia." Instead, the FBC is charged with protecting the waters of the Flathead, and the threats to the ecological and economic integrity of the Basin still exist today.

The resources of the Flathead Basin are not simply local treasures. They are treasures of regional, tribal, state-wide, U.S. and global importance, and include but are not limited to:

- Glacier-Waterton, the first world peace park;
- UN Biosphere Reserve;
- UN Heritage site;
- Flathead Lake, the largest lake west of the Mississippi;
- Full complement of carnivores present at the time of Lewis and Clark;
- Vascular plant diversity that exceeds that of the Serengeti Plain;
- Headwaters for the Columbia River system – the last river system in the continental US that is free of invasive mussels; and
- Headwaters for 3 of the world's oceans.

These resources, if fouled, would represent an irreplaceable loss for the citizens of the state of Montana.

Now that I have set the context I would like to make three key points.

First, in protecting the resource, the FBC's role includes that of a "watchdog" agency. This function is critically important if we are to accurately evaluate the programs that protect our waters. If such functions are eliminated, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to identify programmatic flaws and make needed improvements to better protect our resources. While this function has been unpopular with a small handful state agencies, it is nonetheless of critical value – and it is something that is in short supply in state government.

Second, much has been made of the FBC's ability to raise dollars, and it is true that we have been relatively successful at finding funds to implement our programs. However, it would appear that we are being punished for our success. It is important to note that funders generally seek to fund on-the-ground efforts – whether it's an inspection station or a K-9 team. It can be very difficult, if not impossible, to raise money for staff salaries. Yet, without staff to implement and manage programs, these on-the-ground efforts cannot exist. Programs cannot manage themselves. In other words, a very modest investment in staff yields results far larger than the initial investment from the state. Without this small investment in staff, the larger programmatic goals cannot be brought to fruition.

Third, the FBC's success, and one of its primary roles is that of convener and consensus builder. In the Flathead, many of the threats we have faced or are facing today are multi-faceted and multi-jurisdictional. The issues are complex, and can only be effectively solved by involving all of the Tribes, agencies and stakeholders in the Basin or broader region. For example, in developing an effective AIS prevention program, the FBC convened the Flathead AIS workgroup in 2009 to develop our first AIS Strategic Prevention Plan. The workgroup, with over 30 members, includes Tribes, federal agencies, state agencies, local government, NGOs, local businesses and individual citizen members. The congressional delegation has supported our work, along with both republican and democratic members of the state legislature. In a world divided, the FBC develops consensus and finds solutions.

In closing, I would like to say that I have been fortunate indeed to work for more than a decade with the 23-member FBC board – a board that has consistently supported the development of innovative solutions to complex problems. The FBC is a unique entity. To risk losing it now, at such a critical junction, would not serve the citizens of Montana well. Therefore, we respectfully request that our funding be cut by only 10% -- in line with the cuts being borne by most other agencies. Thank you for your time and consideration.