

A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreille
and Kootenai Tribes

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION
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Legislative Finance Committee
Oct. 4, 2017
Exhibit 11

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Vernon S. Finley - Chairman
Len Twoteeth - Vice Chair
Troy Felsman - Secretary
Anita Matt - Treasurer
Ronald Trahan
Shelly R. Fyant
Leonard W. Gray
Carole Lankford
Dennis Clairmont
Patty Stevens

3 October 2017

Dear Chairman Ballance and Members of the Legislative Finance Committee:

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes support keeping the Flathead Basin Commission funded.

From time immemorial the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes ("CSKT" or "Tribes") have held a profound relationship with the waters and lands of what is now the state of Montana. The plants and animals and the places themselves are of the greatest spiritual and cultural importance to us. We carry forward that relationship today, as this is our responsibility to future generations.

The Tribes, like all of Montana, were extremely alarmed when it was discovered that invasive mussels were found in Montana's Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs last fall – just several hours from Flathead Lake. As we all know, quagga and zebra mussels are catastrophic to water bodies, ecosystems, and economies. If established in Montana waters they will collapse native fish and other forms of aquatic life populations, clog up and destroy irrigation and hydroelectric equipment, attach to docks and boats and shorelines and severely harm property values, and when they die in mass quantities they foul and poison the water. As stewards of our aboriginal lands and waters there is no price we can put on the devastation these mussels would cause. However, economic estimates of the impact these mussels will cost Montana if established is around \$100,000,000 per year.

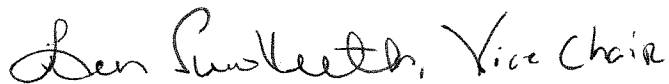
The Tribes' are committed to doing everything in our power to prevent mussels from entering the Flathead basin, the headwaters of the last mussel-free basin in the U.S. Flathead Lake has two sovereigns with jurisdiction over it: the CSKT, with jurisdiction over the south half of the lake; and the State, having jurisdiction over the north half. Because mussels don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries, the State and the Tribes must work together in creating a unified effort to protect the Flathead basin from mussel introduction. The Flathead Basin Commission ("FBC") is a key component in creating this unified protection effort.

House Bill 622, sponsored by Representative Cuffe and signed into law by Governor Bullock in May, created the Upper Columbia Pilot Program to be administered by the FBC. This will put into place critical safeguards needed to protect the Flathead

basin and Flathead Lake. The proposed rules for the Upper Columbia Pilot Program have been jointly drafted between the FBC and CSKT, continuing a long and successful 30 year history of cooperation in protecting the lake. This collaboration between local stakeholders utilizes our community's expertise to build on-the-ground protections that are needed to keep mussels out of the entire Flathead basin. A fully funded FBC is critical in order to carry out the Columbia Pilot Program.

The CSKT believes that every available resource should go into mussel prevention. A small investment in the FBC now will pay dividends thousands of times over by protecting an invaluable cultural resource, as well as one of Montana's major economic drivers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vern Finley, Vice Chair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vernon S. Finley
Chair, Tribal Council
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes