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December 7, 2016

National Invasive Species Council Secretariat
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C Street, N.W., Mailstop 3530
Washington, DC 20240

Secretariat Reaser:

I write regarding a troubling development in Montana that threatens at least two bodies of water that are regulated by the Bureau of Reclamation. As you know, invasive mussel larvae were discovered in the Tiber Reservoir and Canyon Ferry. I urge you to work with stakeholders in Montana to protect our outdoor economy and heritage as we seek to address this issue.

After the Administration's Executive Order on invasive species response yesterday, and as the Invasive Species Advisory Committee is meeting this week, federal and non-federal partners must make aquatic invasive species in headwater states a top priority. As we learned in the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River Basin, the cost of invasive aquatic species is monumental once these species become established. Montana is the source of the enormous Columbia and Missouri River systems. From hydroelectric dams that provide power for the Northwest, to irrigation infrastructure that supplies agriculture, a mussel infestation in Montana puts significant water infrastructure at risk, both in my own state and in downstream states across the west.

The National Invasive Species Council has identified steps the federal government should take in rapid assessment and rapid response; which include technical, financial, and human resources. I request the Council make Montana a top priority to support Governor Bullock's efforts to combat mussels at the front end. As the Council's framework on Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) makes clear, decisive action early on in an infestation can help to drastically limit the spread of invasive species and the cost of control.

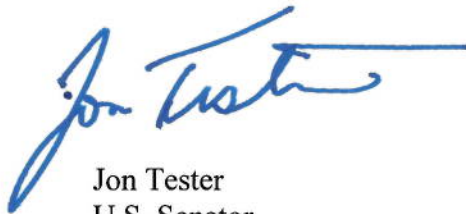
The window for EDRR engagement in Montana is limited. To provide meaningful assistance during this period, you must coordinate with the state's Mussel Incident Response Team to assist in determining the scope of the infestation. The Bureau of Reclamation has already informed me they are working to rapidly evaluate water samples from around Montana for evidence of invasive mussels, and I encourage all partner agencies and technical experts to contribute in a similar fashion, where possible.

While the Montana state government is still determining the best response to this infestation, you should make sure your members and partners are available to provide technical input on control actions. Further, Council member agencies should be prepared to ramp up contributions to control efforts in Montana once the state has decided on an appropriate strategy. By acting decisively, members of the Council could significantly curtail the threat of mussel infestation in Montana and in downstream states.

Invasive species can destroy water infrastructure, limit recreational opportunities, hurt our outdoor economy, and permanently damage the ecology of Montana's world class bodies of water. It is critical that this fight is all hands on deck, and I will be working closely with Department of the Interior and Governor Bullock to limit the spread, and ultimately control the mussel infestation in Tiber Reservoir and Canyon Ferry. Montana's mussel infestation must be a top priority.

I appreciate your assistance in this critical matter. If I can be of any assistance in securing additional resources for combating this infestation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jon Tester
U.S. Senator