

Montana Wildlife Federation • Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Artemis Sportswomen • Helena Hunters and Anglers • Western Bear Foundation Mule Deer Foundation • Laurel Rod and Gun Club • Montana Bowhunters Association Great Falls Archery Club • Anaconda Sportsmen • Backcountry Hunters & Anglers Hellgate Hunters and Anglers • National Wildlife Federation • Montana Trout Unlimited Traditional Bowhunters of Montana • Gallatin Wildlife Association

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke US Department of the Interior Washington, DC 20515

Re: Sportsmen and the Badger-Two Medicine

Dear Secretary Zinke,

The undersigned organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of Montana hunters and anglers who enjoy Montana's public lands and public wildlife. Our members care deeply about public access, vibrant wildlife, and quality habitat. As you know, we are blessed in Montana with top-tier wild places and we depend on our public servants in Washington and the Department of the Interior to fight for these landscapes, our wildlife, and our hunting and angling heritage.

One area of great concern for all Montanans is the Badger-Two Medicine area of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. As a fellow-Montanans, you are well aware that the Badger-Two Medicine was leased for energy development in the mid-1980s without adequate environmental review and consultation. This has put the natural and cultural values at risk. Hunters and anglers have been working collaboratively for decades to retire these illegally issued energy leases. As you well know, recent decisions have put the Badger-Two Medicine back in the cross-hairs. We may very well soon see oil rigs in the very place where elk and grizzlies roam, the Blackfeet worship, and sportsmen traverse. As a native Montanan, friend to the Blackfeet, and fellow sportsman, we are asking for your help.

As part of the Rocky Mountain Front, the Badger-Two Medicine is a wild landscape that holds historical, cultural, ecological, and religious significance to the people of Montana. Because of the high value of the Badger-Two Medicine Area, public and private interests have repeatedly come together to protect this vitally-important national resource. Alongside all those who value the Badge-Two Medicine, sportsmen are the among the most passionate advocates for this sacred space. We respect the history of the landscapes upon which we traverse. When sportsmen visit the Badger-Two Medicine today, we walk in the footsteps of those who valued it long before us.

We recognize that valuable habitat connectivity in the Rocky Mountain Front is threatened as long as the Badger-Two Medicine is open for extractive use. As sportsmen, we realize the importance of connectivity for healthy wildlife. Sportsmen recognize that because of the connectivity that currently exists on the Front, the fish and wildlife values of this landscape are truly exceptional:

- The Rocky Mountain Front is recognized by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks as one of the richest wildlife areas in the U.S. This region offers the most diverse flora and fauna in Montana - 64 of Montana's 89 fish species; 75 of Montana's 109 mammals; 338 of the state's 389 birds; and 7 of the 14 plants and animals listed as "Threatened" or "Endangered". The Rocky Mountain Front harbors populations of all ten of Montana's big game animals.
- The Badger-Two Medicine area is strategically positioned (between Glacier National Park, the Blackfeet Reservation, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex) and provides critical habitat for big game species that then disperse to provide hunting opportunities on adjacent lands.
- Around 250 elk use the Badger-Two Medicine Area for winter range and a portion of the 800 elk that winter in the Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area and Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch migrate to the upper Badger-Two Medicine drainages for summer range.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service has also noted that the Front remains in the top one percent of all wildlife habitats in the lower 48 states. Specifically, the Badger-Two Medicine Area is the best remaining stronghold for genetically pure, native, west-slope cutthroat trout along the Rocky Mountain Front. It is also home to many other native cold- water fish species that have cultural, historical, and ecological value.

The Badger-Two Medicine epitomizes how diverse stakeholders can sit at the table and work together to find lasting solutions for the places they love. As Secretary of the Interior, you have the opportunity to have a positive impact on the future of the Badger-Two Medicine and the connectivity of the Rocky Mountain Front. Secretary Zinke, stand with sportsmen from across Montana and speak up for the future of the Badger-Two Medicine.

Sincerely,

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