

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 21, 2007

The Honorable James M. Hughes  
Acting Director  
US Bureau of Land Management  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW, Room 5655 MIB  
Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

Dear Director Hughes:

We are writing to strongly encourage you to provide funding for Montana's BLM priorities for Fiscal Year 2007. We are increasingly concerned that Montana will face serious setbacks in environmental conservation and forest fire research in 2007 without any Congressional funding instruction to the BLM in the recently passed H.J. Res. 20, the Continuing Appropriations Resolution of 2007.

We are aware of the budget difficulties many agencies will face this year, especially with funding levels set for most agencies at the 2006 enacted levels in the Continuing Resolution. However, many of Montana's ongoing projects received funding from your agency in 2006 and in previous years. Without any continued funding in 2007, these crucial projects will be forced to make drastic cutbacks or halt all activities altogether. This will cost jobs and invaluable research and development for Montana.

H.J. Res. 20 provides the BLM funding for management of lands and resources with \$862.2 million for the 2007 Fiscal Year. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of releasing funds to the following projects for the state of Montana in 2007:

**National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis: \$3.15 million**

This project has received multiple years of consecutive funding from both BLM and the Forest Service Wildland Fire Management. This research is crucial to Montana in understanding and managing wild fires.

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It will improve effectiveness of fire management operations (enhancing firefighter safety, public safety and natural resource management), contribute knowledge and applications for sustaining ecological processes to extractive industries, develop assets and capabilities of natural resource professionals, and expand knowledge of geospatial information technology systems and their utility to fire and fuels management.

**Blackfoot River Special Recreation Management Area: \$5 million**

These funds would help the Blackfoot Challenge acquire land within the scope of the Blackfoot River Special Recreation Management Area in the upper Blackfoot watershed. This land will contribute to a community-based conservation plan utilizing a mix of public agencies and private entities.

We urge your support of these projects that are so critical to the viability of our state of Montana. We appreciate your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus



Jon Tester