

**Portions of Paper Trail**  
**On**  
**FWS Legislative proposal to Transfer National Bison range to the CSKT**  
(Attained by PEER under the Freedom of Information Act)  
[PEER commentary in brackets]  
[Emphasis added]

**From:** Munoz, Anna  
**To:** Noreen Walsh; Will Meeks  
**Subject:** e-mail  
**Date:** Thursday, February 04, 2016 7:16:44 PM

[Conveying a draft email to Mountain-Prairie Region which says in part]

In an effort to achieve the best, long-term solution for meeting our tribal trust responsibilities while still accomplishing the conservation goals of the National Bison Range and the Service as a whole, we are proposing to transfer the lands comprising the National Bison Range in to a federal trust for the benefit of the CSKT.

....

we believe that now is the right time to begin the process of transferring the refuge, which was long ago carved out of tribal lands, into a trust for the benefit of the CSKT.

[In the final email that was sent this was changed to “the potential to support legislation.” And “we believe that now is the right time to investigate the possibility of transferring the refuge, which was long ago carved out of tribal lands, into trust for the benefit of the CSKT.”]

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From: Dan Ashe [[mailto:d\\_m\\_ashe@fws.gov](mailto:d_m_ashe@fws.gov)]

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2016 7:11 PM

To: Vernon Finley

Cc: Brian Upton; Noreen Walsh; [cynthia\\_martinez@fws.gov](mailto:cynthia_martinez@fws.gov); Betsy Hildebrandt; [will\\_meeks@fws.gov](mailto:will_meeks@fws.gov)

Subject: Re: joint statement

Hello Vernon and thank you for your kind note. I am very happy to hear that the CSKT Council is supportive, and we are anxious to begin working together. Our National Wildlife Refuge System Chief, Cynthia Martinez, has been meeting with the Montana delegation staff, and as you described from your visits, she is getting supportive responses.

We met today, with our DOI team, and the DOI Solicitor (Hilary Tomkins) is ready to begin work to draft legislation. Cynthia Martinez will be our point of contact on this effort and stands ready to work with Brian Upton and Hilary. I hope we can have a good draft by the end of next week, as I'm anticipating that the delegation may ask us for assistance in drafting legislation.

....

We also discussed convening the "Transition Team" that we agreed would be helpful. Our lead on this effort is Will Meeks (in Denver), and by copying him with this note, I'm asking him to take steps to convene this team, working with Brian Upton, and with Cynthia Martinez. As we

discussed, we will need to involve BIA, and others from DOI. If you would like others to participate, from the tribal side, please let me know.

On the issue of a joint statement, we stand ready to do that. However, my communications team is suggesting that we hold off, for now, and work on a statement to issue when we have some news, like introduction of legislation.

That makes sense to me, but if you feel differently, please let me know.

Thanks again. We are proud to be working with you on this, and look forward to progress and success!

Dan.

[Note – Vernon Finley is the CSKT tribal chairman.]

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On Feb 17, 2016, at 7:34 PM, Vernon Finley <vernonf@cskt.org> wrote:

Good day Dan:

It was great meeting with you on our recent trip to DC. The news that you shared with Brian Upton and myself concerning the Bison Range couldn't have been greater appreciated by myself and the Council. I shared the meeting as well as the emails that went out to FWS staff with the rest of tribal council and they were all ecstatic as well. I also wanted to thank you for the phone call and agreement to provide a joint statement about the willingness and cooperation between the FWS and CSKT on the transfer.

That statement will be useful when the time is appropriate.

Again thank you for your hospitality and we are looking forward to working with FWS staff to pull the legislation together and presented to Congress.

later,  
vernon

**Date:** February 5, 2016 at 5:44:13 PM MST

**To:** undisclosed-recipients;

**Subject: Important Update from the Fish and Wildlife Service on the Management of National Bison Range**

Good Evening,

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is in discussions with the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) regarding the transfer of the lands comprising the National Bison Range to be held in federal trust for the benefit of the CSKT. This begins a new phase in a longstanding relationship between the Service and CSKT in the conservation of the land, bison, and other natural resources comprising the National Bison Range. The Service believes now is the right time to begin the transition in to trust of a refuge long ago carved out of tribal lands. This is an ongoing process that will require Congressional approval. Please contact me or Roya Mogadam if you have any questions.

Marty

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Martin Kodis  
Chief, Division of Congressional and Legislative Affairs  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**From:** "Washburn, Kevin" <[kevin.washburn@bia.gov](mailto:kevin.washburn@bia.gov)>  
**Date:** November 16, 2015 at 5:11:02 PM EST  
**To:** Dan Ashe <[d\\_m\\_ashe@fws.gov](mailto:d_m_ashe@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Lawrence Roberts <[lawrence\\_roberts@ios.doi.gov](mailto:lawrence_roberts@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Subject:** **Bison Range**

Dear Dan - let us know if/how we can help with the NBR. Larry and I would be happy to brainstorm with you and your team about how to make this work. We do think some advance conversation is a good idea to spot potential issues and have a game plan about options to address them. We also think that legislation will be necessary and would be happy to work with you and OCL on drafting it.

We don't want to be pushy here, but we are excited about this idea!

Let us know how we can help.

Kevin

Kevin K. Washburn  
Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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Washington, DC 20240  
Main number 202-208-7163  
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[kevin.washburn@bia.gov](mailto:kevin.washburn@bia.gov)

[Below are emails that FWS may offer to support the idea that they were merely briefing Congressional staff on NBR history, but in context it is clear it means the history of the transfer proposal]

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Mogadam, Roya** <[roya\\_mogadam@fws.gov](mailto:roya_mogadam@fws.gov)>  
**Date:** Tue, Feb 9, 2016 at 10:01 AM  
**Subject:** Request for Briefing - National Bison Range  
**To:** Cynthia Martinez <[cynthia\\_martinez@fws.gov](mailto:cynthia_martinez@fws.gov)>, Shaun Sanchez <[shaun\\_sanchez@fws.gov](mailto:shaun_sanchez@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Martin Kodis <[martin\\_kodis@fws.gov](mailto:martin_kodis@fws.gov)>, Angela Gustavson <[Angela\\_Gustavson@fws.gov](mailto:Angela_Gustavson@fws.gov)>

Morning Cynthia-

Congressman Zinke's (R-MT-AL) office is requesting a briefing on the National Bison Range. They would like us to come up and give them a brief history and our process for moving forward. They are also meeting with lawyers from one of the tribes this week.

Would you be available next week to meet with them? Maybe on Tuesday before the 2:00ET Hill briefing on monuments? They are in Cannon so it would be a quick walk from Cannon to the 2:00 in Longworth.

-Roya

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Roya Mogadam

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**From:** "Kodis, Martin" <[martin\\_kodis@fws.gov](mailto:martin_kodis@fws.gov)>

**Date:** February 16, 2016 at 10:17:45 AM MST

**To:** Anna Munoz <[anna\\_munoz@fws.gov](mailto:anna_munoz@fws.gov)>

**Subject:** NBR meetings today and Thursday

Anna,

Roya set up some meetings this week for Cynthia to chat with MT member staff about NBR. She'll be there to answer questions primarily, but if there are none, she'll go over the history of NBR and how we got to the decision to start discussing the possibility of transfer.

If there is anything I should know going in please text me: 202-384-3021.

First meeting (Zinke) is today at 1pm est (45 min from now),

The other meetings (Daines and Tester) are on Thursday.

Marty

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Martin Kodis

Chief, Division of Congressional and Legislative Affairs

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

[[Scheduling congressional meetings:](#)]

On Feb 11, 2016, at 7:31 AM, Mogadam, Roya <[roya\\_mogadam@fws.gov](mailto:roya_mogadam@fws.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Anna for pulling this together.

We are looking at scheduling Hill meetings for next week with Cynthia with the following offices:

- Zinke

- Daines

- Tester

- House Natural Resources Minority

We have a very limited block of time next week so if we cannot get some of these scheduled we may push to Wednesday the following week when Will is in town.

-Roya