

Dear Secretary Norton:

We are coming to you as USFWS Retirees from across the spectrum of the Service – refuges, law enforcement, fish hatcheries, ecological services and elsewhere – because each of us knows the struggles that have marked the 100 plus years it has taken to bring the National Wildlife Refuge System to its current level of promise.

We are writing you to ask that you table the plan to turn half of the operations of the National Bison Range Wildlife Refuge in Montana over to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) until serious concerns are properly addressed. Our concerns are that the agreement is –

- Poorly written, giving rise to management headaches;
- Primarily a political arrangement, developed without any policy framework to guide precedent-setting negotiations; and
- A behind-closed-doors affair, without adequate public ventilation.

We are particularly disturbed that those with experience in refuge management have been repeatedly overruled and shut out of the process.

The legacy of lands, waters, and wildlife that are the National Wildlife Refuge System is in our temporary custody for future generations. We are asking that you take some time to assure that this proposed action does not in any way diminish that legacy which many of us have dedicated our professional lives to preserving and enhancing.

Sincerely,