



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2016

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FARM Announces Support for Senator Tester's Compact Ratification, CSKT Settlement Legislation

(Helena, Mont.)—Earlier today Senator Jon Tester announced his introduction of landmark legislation to create jobs, ratify the CSKT Water Compact, and settle the claims of the CSKT against the federal government. This monumental legislation will approve funding for the implementation of the Water Compact, and will remediate extensive damages caused by the federal government.

"We wholeheartedly support Senator Tester's introduction of legislation to ratify the CSKT Water Compact and settle the claims of the Tribe," said FARM co-chair, Lorents Grosfield. "The Water Compact is a landmark negotiated agreement that will provide certainty for water users across our state. Passing this legislation to ratify the Compact and settle the claims of the Tribes against the federal government is the right thing to do for Montana and will protect water users across our state."

Although the Compact settles the litigation that the Tribes would otherwise have to pursue to define the scope of their federally reserved rights, it plays a smaller role in the larger settlement legislation as introduced by Senator Tester.

The proposed legislation would approve settlement funds to rehabilitate and modernize the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Implement the CSKT Water Compact, compensate the Tribes for damages caused by federal negligence, and establish a Tribal Trust Fund that would be used to fund agriculture, economic, and community development on the Flathead Reservation and in Western Montana.

"The funds in this settlement are sorely needed to restore the Irrigation Project and ensure that the project can meet the growing needs of local water users," said FARM spokeswoman Shelby DeMars. "For decades, there has been little to no maintenance of the project and tribal wetlands have been neglected. The process of rehabilitation will be no small task, but these important updates will mean not only more efficient and reliable water delivery, but also more jobs for communities on and off the Reservation."

The jobs created by the proposed settlement legislation would create a long-term boon to Montana's economy by generating millions of dollars in economic activity that would benefit the State of Montana and surrounding communities and by creating exponential savings for taxpayers and water users.

"This settlement would bring in nearly \$53 million annually in new and sustainable economic activity to our state—not to mention an estimated \$774 million in economic activity in the first decade of implementation," said FARM Co-Chair Karen Fagg, a long time business owner and former Director of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. "The creation of thousands of both short and long term jobs, millions of dollars of economic activity, and the certainty provided to water users through the Congressional ratification of the Compact makes this settlement, without question, one of the best investments in the infrastructure and economy of our state in decades."
