



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee Encourages Department of Interior and Congressional Delegation to Ratify remaining Montana Water Compacts

(Helena, Mont.)—At a committee hearing of the Montana State Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee this week, members of the committee voted to send a letter to Secretary of the Interior, Ryan Zinke and members of Montana's Congressional Delegation urging them to take action of the remaining water compacts that require Congressional ratification.

The letter describes the need for final ratification of the CSKT and the Fort Belknap Compacts before the Montana Water Court and the Department of Natural Resources can proceed with processing water rights claims.

The letter urged ratification of the Compacts, stating that the Committee members hope the Department of Interior and Congressional Delegation will work to move the agreements forward. The letter states:

"The Water Policy Interim Committee of the Montana Legislature respectfully requests that our Congressional delegation and the Department of Interior communicate and collaborate with the State of Montana to ensure that our state's progress in resolving historical water rights and finalizing tribal water rights remains on track. Doing so would ensure legal certainty for thousands of farmers, ranchers, homeowners, citizens, cities, and towns."

In reaction to the letter, Tom Beck, Co-Chair of Farmers and Ranchers for Montana, a grassroots coalition that is focused on fair water policies and the implementation of the CSKT Water Compact, stated that the CSKT Compact, and its benefits, are in the hands of our Congressional delegation.

"Without the Compact, farmers, ranchers, and irrigators across our state would be faced with the uncertainty and cost of having to defend their water rights before the Montana Water Court," said Beck. "The decades of expensive litigation is avoidable, but only if our Congressional delegation acts. Without action, this negotiated agreement and the protections it provides to existing water users will languish and the result will be decades of costly litigation that will impact both individual water rights holders and taxpayers."

The CSKT Water Compact was passed by the Montana State Legislature in 2015 and is currently awaiting Congressional ratification. For more information of the CSKT Water Compact and its status in Congress, visit www.MontanaWaterCompact.com

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