

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 7, 2016

The Honorable Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Bullock:

As you are aware after more than a decade of dedicated effort by your staff, previous administrations, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Montanore Project in Lincoln County was recently completed. This achievement opens the door for critically needed jobs in the area. The final step will be the issuance of the Records of Decision (RODs) for approval of the plan of operations by the USFS and all permits required by Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). As it has come to our attention that the MDEQ is considering issuing a ROD for a phased approval, we urge you to consider the benefits of a comprehensive approval for all the required permits and the benefits of the Montanore project to the local Northwest Montana community and our state.

We understand the USFS is preparing a full project approval with permit conditions. The path defined by a comprehensive permit provides a level of certainty to encourage investors to assist in furthering this project. It also provides clear mandated benchmarks which demonstrate compliance or provide important information to the agencies. In contrast, an approval of only the evaluation phase or of partial stages of the project by our state agency would be inconsistent with the federal review, jeopardize investments in the project, create uncertainty, and further delay much-needed job creation and tax revenue for the Lincoln County community, which continues to face the highest unemployment rate in our state. Employing regulatory flexibility by your staff through a full permit approval will provide assurances the community and the company require to move forward.

The local community has waited a long time for the process to be completed. We respectfully request for you to prioritize this project and for MDEQ to issue a full ROD as expeditiously as possible so that this important project can proceed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue to benefit our state of Montana.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



RYAN ZINKE
Member of Congress

CC: Mr. Tom Livers, Director, Montana Department of Environmental Quality