

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

March 31, 2014

Mr. Ron Trahan
Chairman, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
P.O. Box 278
Pablo, MT 59855

Dear Chairman Trahan,

I enjoyed our February 26 discussion and appreciate your commitment to the proposed water compact between the State of Montana and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes. I am likewise convinced that negotiated settlement represents the best resolution for the people of Montana. The June 30, 2015, deadline for the Tribes to file their claims in the statewide general stream adjudication means that the 2015 legislative session represents the final opportunity for the legislature to approve the Compact prior to the filing of claims.

The recent dissolution of the Flathead Joint Board of Control and reassumption of the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project by the Bureau of Indian Affairs leaves the Compact without the protections for FIIP irrigators that were previously negotiated as the "Water Use Agreement." I would like to extend to the Tribes a formal invitation to reopen negotiations with the State for the purpose of resolving this issue so that legislation may be presented to the 2015 legislature. The State believes that negotiations concerning FIIP water use should be based upon the same premise that motivated the initial negotiations -- namely, that irrigation deliveries will be protected and that water saved through upgrades and repairs to the FIIP will be allocated to Tribal instream flows.

With a renewed commitment by all parties, both to additional negotiations and to public outreach and education, I believe that we have an historic opportunity to assure recognition of Tribal water rights in a manner that protects water users and allows communities to develop and thrive both on and off the Reservation. I appreciate the Council's continued commitment to this outcome and look forward to further productive discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Bullock", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

