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Sarah Feldman | 202.604.5521

Roy Loewenstein | 202.913.0188

Tester Introduces Legislation to Permanently Protect Badger-Two Medicine

Senator’s bill, backed by Blackfeet Tribe, designates 127,000 acres as the Badger-Two Medicine Cultural Heritage Area

(U.S. Senate) – In the wake of a federal court decision upholding the cancellation of the final oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine, U.S. Senator Jon Tester today took the final step in his years-long push to permanently protect the sacred area by introducing legislation to designate the 127,000 acres in the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest as the Badger-Two Medicine Cultural Area.

“A few weeks ago, the Blackfeet Tribe and the people of Montana won a huge victory for our public lands when the last oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine was remanded to a lower court,” said Tester. “Now it’s time we build on this momentum and continue the fight to safeguard this sacred area, which is why I am introducing legislation that honors the will of the Blackfeet Tribe and of public lands owners across our state by permanently protecting the Badger-Two Medicine for future generations.”

“The Blackfeet Nation has maintained a profound connection to the Badger-Two Medicine since time immemorial,” said Timothy Davis, Chairman of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. “It is our last cultural refuge, home to many of our origin stories, a stronghold for our ceremonies and traditions, and until it is permanently protected, we cannot rest. This bill ensures the teaching of our Pikuni ancestors will be fulfilled and we can always be connected with the sacred. We are
extremely grateful to Senator Tester for his support and leadership in our effort to protect these sacred lands.”

Tester’s *Badger-Two Medicine Protection Act* designates 127,000 acres in the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest in Glacier and Pondera counties as the Badger-Two Medicine Cultural Heritage Area. This legislation would build upon existing protections by prohibiting commercial timber harvest, excluding vegetation management; making permanent the existing road construction ban; banning the use of motorized vehicles and mountain bikes; and prohibiting new structures including water facilities, pipelines, or buildings of any kind. Maintenance of existing structures, grazing allotments, and current activities would still be permitted.

The designated area includes no private property, and only one active grazing lease, which would be grandfathered in.

In addition to the management restrictions, the legislation also requires the Forest Service to consider new management proposals put forward by the Tribe, to consult with the Tribe on management twice a year, and it gives the Tribe two 30-day veto windows on proposed new uses at the beginning and end of the environmental review process.

“The Badger-Two Medicine is some of the finest wild country in Montana, and a cherished land where so many of us who live here hunt, hike, ride horses or enjoy time in nature,” Peter Metcalf, Executive Director of the Glacier-Two Medicine Alliance. “This bill reflects a shared, made-in-Montana vision for the future of these culturally and ecologically important lands. We applaud Senator Tester for his leadership and look forward to working with him and the rest of Montana’s delegation to pass this important legislation.”

"We'd like to thank Senator Tester for his leadership in seeking permanent protection for the Badger-Two Medicine,” said Ben Gabriel, Executive Director of the Montana Wilderness Association. “We're pleased that the Senator has taken steps to ensure the Blackfeet Tribe has a meaningful voice in the Badger's management. Montana Wilderness Association has been working to secure the future of this special place for nearly 40 years, and passing the *Badger-Two Medicine Protection Act* will be the final step in protecting one of the most culturally significant and ecologically rich areas on the Rocky Mountain Front."

“The Badger-Two Medicine is not only essential to the Blackfeet culture, but is also a vital part of Montana’s outdoor traditions,” said Scott Brennan, Montana State Director of the Wilderness Society. “This area is an important wildlife sanctuary and a recreational paradise. The Badger-Two Medicine deserves to be permanently protected and we thank Senator Tester for his efforts to ensure that it is.”

“For decades, the spectacular lands of the Badger-Two Medicine have been overshadowed by a cloud of uncertainty. Now that cloud is lifting,” said Michael Jamison, Crown of the Continent Senior Program Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. “This legislation is especially powerful, as it not only protects our wild heritage but also gives voice to those who, throughout too much of our history, have not been heard. It’s time to
permanently protect the Badger-Two Medicine’s wildlands and wildlife, and to honor forever the Blackfeet Nation’s last cultural refuge."

“Montana hunters and anglers have long known that protecting the Badger-Two Medicine is the right thing to do for the Blackfeet, wildlife, and access for all to wildlands,” said Marcus Strange, Program and Partnership Director for the Montana Wildlife Federation. “We thank Senator Tester for his leadership on this critical bill ensuring that generations from now, hunters and anglers from all walks of life will still be hunting and fish this special place we call the Badger.”

“Montana hunters and anglers applaud Senator Tester’s efforts to permanently protect the Badger-Two Medicine,” said John B. Sullivan III, Board Chair of the Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. “This wild, undeveloped landscape is held sacred by the Blackfeet people and revered by all who lay eyes on it or set food in it, which is why we’re pleased to see permanent public access included. Senator Tester’s legislation introduced today will ‘keep it the way it is’ forever, something all public land owners can get behind.”

“Protecting the Badger-Two Medicine will be a great step forward for the Blackfeet Nation and for Montana hunters and anglers,” Tom France, Regional Executive Director for the National Wildlife Federation. “Both the Montana and National Wildlife Federations applaud Senator Tester for introducing this important legislation.”

The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service granted 47 oil and gas leases in the sacred Badger-Two Medicine area in 1982 without consulting with the Blackfeet Tribe. The final lease is still pending in the courts, with a strong rebuke and remand to the District Court last month.

Tester has long supported protecting the Badger-Two Medicine, and has repeatedly called on the Department of the Interior to cancel the remaining leases in the area, citing the area's importance to the Blackfeet Tribe and Montana's sportsmen and women.

The Badger-Two Medicine is located at the intersection of the Blackfeet Reservation, Glacier National Park, and the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Text of Tester’s legislation can be found HERE.

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