

United States Senate

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March 13, 2007

Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520-0099

Dear Secretary Rice:

The North Fork of the Flathead River, which rises in Canada, serves as the western boundary of Glacier National Park when it enters Montana. It is a federal Wild and Scenic River, and it feeds into Flathead Lake, the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. Glacier National Park, the Flathead River system and the clean, clear waters of Flathead Lake serve as the backbone of the economy of northwestern Montana.

In December 1988, in reply to a 1984 referral by Secretary of State George Schultz and Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark, the International Joint Commission (IJC) delivered a finding on a proposed coal mine in British Columbia. The mine was to be located on a tributary of the Flathead River that flows into Montana. The IJC unanimously concluded that pollution caused by the mine would constitute a breach of treaty obligations between the United States and Canada. Subsequently, the mine proponent withdrew the coal development proposal.

There is now another proposal on the table for a coal mine in the same area. This represents a renewed threat of degradation and destruction of social, environmental and economic assets that are important to Montana. In the face of this threat, I strongly encourage you to request a hearing by the International Joint Commission on the current mining proposal. It is of the utmost importance to Montana's outdoor heritage, and our nation's environmental legacy, to stop this mine and protect the Flathead River basin.

For the International Joint Commission to issue a finding on this case against the proposed coal mine, this hearing must be requested by the U.S. State Department. Montana has always regarded the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, which formed the IJC, as an important tool. The investigation I am requesting would be an effective way of bringing that tool to bear in defense of Montanans' right to a healthy environment.

Montanans are outdoor people. We enjoy sharing our legacy of hunting and fishing with our children, and work hard to preserve our rivers, lakes, forests and rangelands for future generations.

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This mining proposal presents serious risks to that valuable legacy in the Flathead River Basin and Glacier National Park. I look forward to the opportunity to bring international scrutiny to mining plans that would degrade some of Montana's most pristine bodies of water.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in requesting an International Joint Commission hearing on the Flathead Basin mining proposal. This is a critically important issue for Montanans. Please feel free to contact me or my staff if we can be of any assistance in bringing this matter to a speedy conclusion.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Max Baucus". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".

MSB/ws