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March 1, 2022

The Honorable Peter Buttigieg
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590-001

RE: NSFLTP – US93: Ninepipe and Post Creek Sections Project (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes)

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I write on behalf of Hellgate Hunters & Anglers to express our support for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Grant for the US 93 Ninepipes and Post Creek Sections Project. Hellgate Hunters & Anglers is a locally based rod and gun club representing over 500 sportsmen and women across Western Montana. We have deep ties to the CSKT and enjoy the privilege of recreating on their lands. This project represents their continued dedication to maintaining productive, connected wildlife habitat on tribal lands and the Refuge.

The CSKT has led the way on a national level for proactively addressing habitat connectivity and reducing wildlife-motorist collisions through their use of wildlife crossings. This project in particular runs through critically important grizzly bear habitat and bisects secure riparian zones that grizzlies use for secure cover. This project will build a safer corridor for wildlife, thereby preserving the area as a natural grizzly bear migration route. Additionally, the project will reduce habitat fragmentation in the project area and facilitate wildlife movement along the US 93 corridor, preventing further wildlife/vehicle mortalities in the area.

There is significant value for other species, including upland game bird populations like ring-necked pheasant and Hungarian partridge—two species that draw hunters in droves to the Flathead Reservation each fall. This is a significant source of revenue for the CSKT's wildlife management work and the local economy. Projects like this ensure that upland game populations will continue to enjoy connected habitat without the risk of crossing a highway.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

Walker Conyngham
President
Hellgate Hunters & Anglers