

United States Senate

November 14, 2023

The Honorable Anthony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

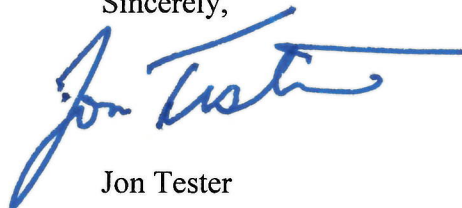
I am writing today concerning the selenium contamination issue in the Kootenai watershed in Montana. In March of this year, Canada pledged to reach an agreement with the United States to address the contamination of the Kootenai watershed by the end of the summer. It is disappointing that this commitment from Canada did not materialize, especially as the selenium contamination issue continues to grow worse. As such, I respectfully request that the United States refer this issue to the International Joint Commission (IJC). Our clean water is too important to sit by idly while Canada fails to uphold its end of the agreement.

I first raised this issue with the Department of State in July of 2015, citing concerns about selenium contamination in the Kootenai watershed impacts Montana's outdoor recreation economy, the quality of water, and the health of aquatic life in the State. Moreover, the pollution affects the United States' ability to fulfill our trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribes that have a direct tie to this watershed, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana.

The selenium contamination issues only continue to compound in northwest Montana, and we can no longer delay a solution. It is time to refer this case to the IJC. I urge you to work with Canada to pursue a joint reference to the IJC, but to move forward with a unilateral reference if Canada remains unwilling to meaningfully engage on this issue.

I stand ready to work with you to address the contamination of the Kootenai watershed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

Jon Tester