

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 18, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

The previous administration, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), attempted over the past several years to make significant changes that would have negatively impacted what has been a successfully operating FWS facility known as the D.C. Booth Historic National Hatchery and Archives in Spearfish, South Dakota – which operates via a partnership with the City of Spearfish and the non-profit Booth Society, Inc.

Since 2013, the FWS has made internal decisions in an attempt to permanently close several fish hatcheries nationwide, including the D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery. That closure was scheduled for October 1, 2013. In a bipartisan effort, members of Congress intervened and have successfully kept D.C. Booth and other fish hatcheries scheduled for closure open. Efforts by FWS to relocate the National Fish and Aquatic Conservation Archive located at the D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery have also been stopped by Congress. The Archive is an integral function of the facility.

Our most recent effort includes the attached letter to former Secretary Jewell in which we expressed our support for continued operations and adequate staffing for the Hatchery. It is important to note that during the FWS's closure attempts, the Hatchery's full time federal staff was irresponsibly allowed to decline from seven federal full time employees in 2013 to one federal full time employee for approximately two and a half years from 2014 to 2016.

In the attached letter, we requested that the FWS fill the curator and archivist positions at the D.C. Booth Archives. We were pleased that the FWS filled the facility operations specialist position in 2016, and more recently, the museum curator position in January 2017. However, the D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery still needs, at a minimum, two additional federal full time employees to be fully-functioning and in stable operating condition.

The D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery is critically important to the Spearfish community, its economy, and its residents, as more than 160,000 people visit the Hatchery each year. The Hatchery has provided jobs and volunteer opportunities in the community, and it exemplifies a successful federal public lands partnership.

We again ask that the FWS timely fill at least two federal full time positions at the D.C. Booth Hatchery. We also respectfully request that you provide us with a timeline for filling these vacancies. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

CC: Aurelia Skipwith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Sincerely,



John Thune  
U.S. SENATOR



M. Michael Rounds  
U.S. SENATOR



Kristi Noem  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE