



Lewis & Clark Rural Water System

EXPLORER

Fall, 1997

LEWIS & CLARK AT CRITICAL STAGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Congress has had an extremely busy Summer: budget hearings, investigations, campaign finance reform, new international trade policies, national security issues, transportation issues, etc. Important they are. However, try telling that to a mother of two small children who has to drive 10 miles to town to get bottled water. Where does water and water projects fit into the national priority list when so many important issues are on the table? For those waiting for the answer about their water resources, it is difficult to understand the legislative process.

Water projects and water legislation receive no special treatment—and why



—In Rep. Thune's Washington office; L to R: John Weaver, David Odens, Herman Otten, Pam Bonrud, Rep. John Thune, Charlie Kuehl, Bill Weber, Randy Van Dyke, Al Johnson.

should they? Obviously, every issue should be debated and should have proper hearings. There isn't any "FastTrack" program for the necessities in life. Everything has a place and an order.

Well, even though this may sound cynical it is merely recognition of the process any and all important issues endure. Many projects considered worthy and necessary have not made it through the process in their first, second or even third attempt. Some don't make it at all. The Lewis & Clark Rural Water System is enduring this process well. The board has taken careful steps to inform, discuss, review, present, document and lobby. The good news is that all the work has begun to pay off.



—Touring Minnehaha's Water Treatment Plant; L to R: Charlie Kuehl, Bob Faber, Don Hentges, John Buss, David Odens.

RANKING REPRESENTATIVES & STAFFERS TOUR SYSTEM

Earlier this summer, Congressman John Thune, SD, Bob Faber, ranking staff member of the Water & Power Subcommittee, Steve Lanich, Minority Staff member of the same committee and Valerie West, House Resources staffer toured the tri-state member water systems. The visit, though not unprecedented, was a rare opportunity to have both policymaker and ranking staff members evaluate and speak directly to water system managers who are working diligently to secure a future water source for their customers.

Congressman Thune summed up his visit to the Minnehaha Community Water System by saying, "We [congress] have to find ways to bring future water resources to these member systems. The economic viability and health of the communities and farm operations depend on it. I'll do what ever I can to see that this project gets the needed attention in Washington." Thune went on to talk about the water issues in other areas of the state and added, "People working together will make water projects a reality. You have my support."

The visit by Bob Faber was an important step towards letting key staff members see first hand the water development issues facing the plains states. Mr. Faber works for Congressman Doolittle, Chairman of the House Resources Committee. The House committee determines the fate of water projects. The first hearing in the House committee is expected in February 1998. A hearing was held in the Senate on October 7th and succeeded in providing a step forward for the project.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF WATER

INTRODUCTION

The news from Washington highlights a good economy. We have low inflation, low unemployment, a lower trade deficit and favorable sales reports from American companies. This is good news for Americans. Much of the success of a region or a country is based on the infrastructure, workforce and a commitment to build quality products. Resources to maintain a strong economy can start with the most basic of needs. These basic needs include people, land, water and utilities. Of these four basic needs, land availability would not be considered a problem in the Midwest as we have an abundance of land for continued growth.

In the Midwest, we have an economic paradox: we have seen incremental growth in business and new construction starts. Where we have a paradox is in the challenge of limited resources of two kinds: people and water. We cannot grow and develop our manufacturing and ag processing businesses without each of these vital resources.

Through deregulation and new technology, we have seen changes in our utilities, which includes a better electrical power source, a safe and affordable natural gas supply, and telecommunications, which includes a new emphasis on Internet services and data communications.

Of these four basic needs we have one natural resource—water—that, without government intervention, could slow population growth, business expansion, and potentially threaten the health and welfare of the existing population in the region currently bordered by Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota.

The following perspectives discuss the importance of water and identifying new water sources for

the future of the region known as the Lewis & Clark Rural Water System membership area:

FROM JEFF ECKHOFF

Director, Minnehaha County Economic Development Association



—Jeff Eckhoff, Director of
Minnehaha County Economic
Development Association

Water is absolutely essential to economic development. I currently work with 15 communities in Minnehaha and Lincoln county. Almost everyone is severely restricted in the type of industries they can attract. Ironically, many of the applications that need water in their process are in the value-added agriculture industry. They are

unable to capitalize on the abundant natural resources of this region because of the water limitation.

Aside from these obvious industrial applications, the net effect a limited water supply will have on housing is also a looming obstacle to economic growth. With industry comes employees that need affordable housing and utilities. Without an adequate supply of water, both in quantity and quality, communities are placed in the difficult position of being unable to locate a business or its workforce.

FROM ART deWITT

Chairman, Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce



—Art deWitt, Chairman Sioux
Falls Area Chamber of Commerce

The key to growth and prosperity in our community and in the surrounding area is,



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Charlie Kuehl, Chairman LCRWS

Thanks to the efforts of our six senators, we are able to tell you about another successful hearing before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Water and Power on October 7.

It was exciting for us to have an opportunity to appear before the subcommittee and talk about the drinking water needs of the tri-state area. We thank Senator Jon Kyl (AZ), chairman of the Subcommittee on Water and Power, for inviting us to testify on our federal legislation—S. 777. We also thank Senators Johnson, Daschle, Grams, Wellstone, Harkin and Grassley for their personal words of support and statements for the record. I also want to recognize Representative John Thune for appearing in person before the subcommittee and Representatives Minge and Latham for their statements for the hearing record. Finally, but not least, two of our governors came through in flying colors and also provided written testimony for the hearing record. Thank you Governors Janklow and Branstad.

There are a number of you who receive this newsletter who also took the time to submit written statements or letters of support for the project's hearing. While I wish I could recognize each of you individually, space will not allow me to do so. Please know that we know who you are and appreciate your personal commitment to Lewis and Clark. Thank you!

Hopefully in the next issue of the Explorer, we will be bringing you more good news from the federal front. Until then, my wishes to you and your families for a very happy holiday season!!

and will continue to be, water development.

As the Sioux Falls area faces a serious need for water supply by the year 2015, the Lewis and Clark Pipeline is needed to secure quality water and to allow for more water usage as we continue to grow in the next century. On behalf of the business community, I commend all those involved in these efforts to ensure future water supply as well as conservation accountability, environmental protection and wetland and wildlife enhancement throughout the project.

FROM RANDY JORGENSON

Executive Director, Southwest Minnesota Regional Development Commission

Water is key to the meat packing industries in Luverne and Worthington. It is also key to livestock producers in Rock and western Nobles County. This industry and its related primary and secondary economic activities account for literally thousands of jobs in Southwestern Minnesota.

Meat packers, after the loss of Campbell's employ on the order of 2,000 people. If we assume a total multiplier effect of between 1.5 and 2, total employment impact of these plants is close to 3,000 to 4,000 people. In addition, Minnesota Department of Agriculture data has suggested similar employment multipliers for hog confinement facilities.

These facilities and their presence within the region also provide enhanced market opportunities for the region's livestock producers (at least as far as 75 miles).

There has already been one pork plant closed in South Dakota. If others do not remain open, it will have an impact on the price directly tied to livestock production. They have a competitive advantage in locating in Worthington because of the size of the local hog production. If the production declines, Worthington becomes less attractive and the facility could easily be relocated to areas of growing production.

If Lewis and Clark water is critical to the survival of the area's packing plants, it is

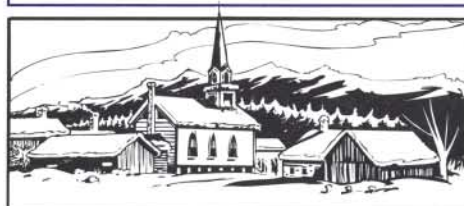
critical to the fundamental economic base of the region. Livestock and livestock processing drive the economy in Nobles and Rock Counties.

The absence of this project will significantly reduce the ability of area communities to site heavy water value added agricultural facilities or other business and/or industries. This water, in its treated form, is a resource we cannot economically live without.



HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!

From All
Of Us, To
All Of You!



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Pam Bonrud, Exec. Director, LCRWS

I, too, join Chairman Kuehl in thanking those of you who responded to my calls to send a letter of support for Lewis and Clark to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Water and Power for our recent hearing. It's great knowing that we have so many supporters who we can count on when we need that extra special effort to help Lewis and Clark in its federal authorization!!

Also on the federal front, we were pleased to have three important staff members of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources visit us in August. Bob Faber, Valerie West and Steve Lanich were all able to find time to come to our area and visit with project sponsors in their home towns. It was a great opportunity to have these folks come and learn first hand about our drinking water needs.

While a great deal of our focus has been turned to Washington, D.C. and Capitol Hill lately, we have begun thinking about state legislative issues for 1998. The South Dakota members of Lewis and Clark will be working with its legislators in securing a \$50,000 grant to assist them with 1998 project activities. In Iowa, the membership has determined that they will be seeking a \$25,000 grant from the 1998 Iowa legislature and for Minnesota, the membership will be looking for \$5,000 in state funding in 1998.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season!

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SENATOR DASCHLE ON LCRWS

The recent hearing in the Senate on the authorization of Lewis & Clark has left me optimistic about the final passage of this legislation next year. First and foremost, the representatives of the project, LCRWS Executive Director Pam Bonrud, Mayor Herman Otten of Tea and others, really did an outstanding job describing to the Senate committee the need for the system, its cost-effectiveness and feasibility. There's no doubt that the future economic growth of this region hinges upon developing a new clean and secure drinking water supply, and I think



their testimony made this basic fact clear to the committee.

Second, we are now well positioned to guide this bill through the rest of the legislative process in the Senate. Two of the bill's cosponsors, Sen. Grams and Sen. Johnson, sit on the committee. Most importantly, the question of the local cost share hopefully has been settled by the willingness of the City of Sioux Falls to pay a full 50 percent of its share of costs. Although some have suggested that the Bureau of Reclamation is still not satisfied with this arrangement, I would point out that both Mini Wiconi and Mid-Dakota were authorized despite similar misgivings by the Administration. Congress under-

stands the need for these projects and supports a strong federal role to make them possible. Indeed, Congress recently increased funding for Mni Wiconi and Mid-Dakota by a total of \$10 million over the President's request a solid demonstration of the support these large rural water systems enjoy in Congress. Given these facts, I am confident that we will see committee approval of the bill during next year's session of Congress.

Things look equally good in the House. I understand that they have scheduled a hearing on the bill as early as February. I am hopeful that this bill will be enacted next year and that we will be able to see the day in the not-to-distant future when clean and abundant Missouri River water will be made available to the residents of this region of the states.

If you'd like to get in touch with Sen. Daschle, you can call at 800-424-9094 or E-mail him at tom_daschle@daschle.senate.com.
