

EXPLORER

Fall, 1998

LEWIS & CLARK GETS FIRST HEARING IN THE U.S. HOUSE



—Congressman Dave Minge (MN), Senator Tim Johnson (SD), Representative John Thune (SD), and Representative Tom Latham (IA)

Notice of a hearing in a U.S. House committee in June was a real boost to the many people working on the Lewis and Clark rural water project. The hearing was held on June 18, 1998 before the Water and Power Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee. The committee is chaired by Representative John Doolittle of California.

Representing Lewis & Clark at the hearing were, Mayor Gary Hanson of

Sioux Falls; Don Habicht of Worthington Water and Lights Commission; and Randy Van Dyke of the Clay Regional Water System, Spencer, IA.

The House hearing was anticipated for some time as a hearing was held in the Senate in October of 1997. Expectations for the member systems were that the House hearing would

LEWIS AND CLARK PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

In another congressional first, legislation to authorize the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System received approval from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on September 23, 1998.

"This was a significant step forward for the project," said Pam Bonrud, LCRWS Executive Director. "Now we have a congressional committee on record in support of federal authorization for Lewis and Clark."

Over the past months, project sponsors and their senators from South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota have been working with the Senate Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman John Kyl (AZ) in reaching a compromise to move project legislation forward. An agreement was reached that allowed full committee action on September 23 to take place. The compromise focused on which federal agency will eventually provide funding for project construction. Senator Kyl also made a commitment to Lewis and Clark and its senators to work with them in finalizing authorizing legislation next year.

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Charlie Kuehl, Chairman LCRWS

A very successful Eighth Annual Membership Meeting was held on May 28 at the Sioux Falls Ramkota Inn. Highlights of the evening included messages from our congressional delegations and recognition of the first awardees of the Lyle Trautman Memorial Award. This award is given to individuals who deserve special recognition for going above and beyond the normal call of duty in assisting Lewis and Clark.

Lyle Trautman, former Lewis and Clark board member, exemplified the kind of personal commitment that is acknowledged by this award and was recognized posthumously by receiving the first award. Gladys Trautman, Lyle's wife, accepted the award on behalf of her family. The second award was given in recognition of Senator John Kibbie from northwest Iowa for his diligent efforts on behalf of Lewis and Clark in the Iowa Legislature. Senator Kibbie has resigned from the Iowa Legislature and his presence will be sorely missed.

The U.S. House of Representatives held its first ever subcommittee hearing on our federal authorizing legislation in June. Due to excellent testimony provided by Mayor Gary Hanson of Sioux Falls, Don Habicht with the City of Worthington, and Randy Van Dyke of the Clay Regional Water System in Spencer, IA, the need for LCRWS was well supported. I also want to recognize the special efforts of Representative John Thune in convincing Chairman John Doolittle to hold the hearing. Thanks also to Senator Tim Johnson, Representative Dave Minge and Representative Tom Latham for their personal appearances at the hearing on the project's behalf.

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begin a final countdown towards authorization and finally, funding of the three-state, \$283 million project.

All who attended at the hearing called it a success. As Chairman Doolittle listened intently to testimony, LCRWS representatives and congressional supporters described the drinking water needs and development stages of LCRWS for federal authorization. Since this was the first ever House hearing on LCRWS, this was an excellent opportunity for the team to describe the tri-state area's struggle in developing and maintaining an adequate drinking water supply. LCRWS extends appreciation to Representative Thune for his continued efforts in securing Chairman Doolittle's commitment to hold a hearing on LCRWS in the 105th Congress.

Testimony provided a historical perspective of other water projects and funding criteria. Susan Kladiva, Associate Director, Energy, Resources, and Science Issues, U.S. General Accounting Office testified about the results of a GAO study which looked at the funding criteria currently used by federal programs in determining the eligibility of projects for funding. She also described how LCRWS did not "fit" into any of the traditional funding programs used at the federal level. She explained that Congress has approved the use of grant funding through the Bureau of Reclamation for projects preceding LCRWS through passage of federal authorizing legislation.

Eluid Martinez, Commissioner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, provided testimony that mirrored testimony given by him at previous congressional hearings in the Senate. He pointed out

that the need for LCRWS was real and thoroughly documented. He also said the project was technically sound and feasible. However, he still had to state the administration's opposition to the cost share package contained in H.R. 1688. He also expressed a willingness by his agency to work with Congress and the project sponsors in resolving the complex issue of project financing.

Representative Thune joined Chairman Doolittle at the subcommittee platform during the question and answer session. He was able to ask questions of Commissioner Martinez that further highlighted the technical merits of LCRWS and the Bureau's history of working successfully with similar projects in South Dakota. He also asked questions of the LCRWS representatives that provided more details of the drinking water needs facing the tri-state area.

LCRWS is grateful to Senator Johnson, Representative Thune, Representative Minge and Representative Latham for their personal appearance before the subcommittee in support of LCRWS. We also thank Senator Daschle, Governor Janklow, and Governor Branstad for their written testimony in support of H.R. 1688.

Representative Doolittle requested a second GAO report on LCRWS in July. This report is to outline the economic benefits of the construction of LCRWS to not only the tri-state region, but the nation as well. We do not expect this report to be finished before February 1999. How this will impact the ability for Lewis & Clark to gain federal authorization in the 105th Congress remains to be seen.

FEATURE SYSTEM

CLAY COUNTY RURAL WATER

The original vision for the Clay County RWS was conceptualized by a study in 1976. A final signup campaign began in Nov. 1977 after getting board approval a month earlier.

Many homes, farms, municipalities, and industries in northwestern Iowa have difficulty in obtaining a safe and dependable supply of water. Because of this need ten separate rural water systems were organized and built since 1970. These systems provide service to much of the rural area in Iowa. Clay County Rural Water was one of these systems, beginning service in 1981 with a membership of 925 and now serves 1,676 members. The systems service area includes Clay county and portions of Dickinson County. Since that time, many of the counties east of Clay Rural Water have also expressed an interest in joining their system.

One component needed to predict water use within the project boundaries is the current population.

This information was tabulated by county and by municipality. The rural population was determined by subtracting the municipal population from the total population for each

county. Unincorporated towns which were not listed were assumed to have a population of 50.

Need for an improved water supply varies significantly throughout the study area. Many communities have an excellent supply, both in quantity and quality.

Others are not so fortunate, having difficulty in securing reliable, high quality water. This study did not attempt to specifically determine the level of need for each community but assumed that the smaller communities would be those with the

highest level of need and that the larger communities, because of the greater resources available to them, would have a lower need.

The level of evaluation provided in this study provided important cost and benefit information to all communities in the study area and the design process. The next step that Clay County hopes to take very soon is the implementation of water connection to the Lewis & Clark Rural Water System. Just as neighboring water systems have been plagued with water quality concerns, Clay County also is compelled to find a new water source to meet quality and quantity problems.



--Clay County Office Building (above) and Board of Directors (below)



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Pam Bonrud, Exec. Director, LCRWS

Too often we fail to recognize the widespread effort it takes to make a project like Lewis and Clark succeed. Lewis and Clark is extremely fortunate to have a committed membership and board of directors. But, it also takes the effort of many others to help us succeed.

There is a group of dedicated individuals who don't always get their due recognition. These individuals have put up with my badgering and endless questions about how to keep Lewis and Clark moving in Congress. They patiently hold my hand when anxieties get high and always take my panicked phone calls. I want to take time now to recognize our "unsung" heroes, the staffers who work in the background with us day and night representing our United States senators and representatives.

Anyone, who has worked with Congress, knows that having a good staff person as your contact in a congressional office makes all the difference in the world. This person is your direct link to your congressional representative. We are extremely

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fortunate to have a good team working with us at the staff level in Washington, D.C..

Listed below are the names of those staff people we work with most closely and what office they represent. A most heartfelt "Thank You" to each one for their commitment to Lewis and Clark. The next time you see one of your senators or representatives, be sure to tell them "thanks" too for having such good staff!!!

Dwight Fettig - Senator Tim Johnson
Peter Hanson - Senator Tom Daschle
John Weaver - Representative John Thune
John Revier - Senator Rod Grams
Kelly Ross - Senator Paul Wellstone
Ross Bennett - Representative Dave Minge
John Conrad - Senator Charles Grassley
Richard Bender - Senator Tom Harkin
Mike Gruber - Representative Tom Latham

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Other federally authorized rural water projects in South Dakota previously received their financing through the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. This appears to not be the case for Lewis and Clark. Discussions will continue between Lewis and Clark, our senators and Senator Kyl in determining what role the Bureau and other agencies will play in constructing and funding Lewis and Clark.

"Lewis and Clark is most fortunate to have the senators we do backing our federal legislation," said Charlie Kuehl, Chairman. "Their diligence in pursuing a compromise with Senator Kyl paid huge dividends with the committee's approval of our legislation. We thank each of our senators for all of their hard work."