



EXPLORER

Summer, 1998

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE OFFICIALS MEET WITH LCRWS BOARD



—Sioux Falls Mayor Gary Hansen asks questions at Tea Meeting with Senator Tim Johnson

Representatives of the General Accounting Office (GAO) met with the LCRWS board of directors at its April 23 board meeting to discuss a study requested by Senator Jon Kyl (AZ), Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Water and Power. GAO is the legislative research agency for Congress. Senator Kyl asked the GAO to determine which federal agency is best suited for financing major rural water system construction. The federal agencies he asked the GAO to explore include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Brad Hathaway, representing GAO's office in Washington, D.C., and Rudy Payan, from GAO's office in Denver, CO,

described their research process to LCRWS board members and what they expect to accomplish in their report to Senator Kyl. They were very interested in learning about the financial needs of LCRWS and the reasoning for the cost share proposal contained in the federal legislation. The board also described the needs for LCRWS and the long-standing relationship with the BOR. LCRWS emphasized that it wished to remain a BOR project and that the cost share proposal is the most affordable option for its membership.

One important point made by the GAO representatives was that the study will not contain a recommendation to Senator Kyl as to which agency is best suited for LCRWS. The report will outline the funding criteria used by each agency and relate those criteria to the financial needs of the projects included in the study. They are expecting to put the information they gather into a matrix format to best relate where each project "fits" within each agency's program. A direct recommendation will not be made in the report, as GAO believes it is a policy decision for Congress to make.

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HOUSE HEARING SCHEDULED



—Congressman John Thune

Being the lone congressman in your state is a challenge in its own right. But when you have been given the lead on a project that spans three states and costs \$283 million, it takes a great deal

of political will and determination to garner support from the congressional leadership. Though this project is vital to the area, the Lewis & Clark Rural Water System has taken small, careful steps forward to get to the hearing stage. Now, just weeks before summer recess, the urgency for a hearing date in the House of Representatives has brought a concerted effort from Rep. David Minge-MN, Rep. Tom Latham-IA and Rep. John Thune-SD.

During a rally of support for Lewis & Clark in Washington, D.C. in early May, Rep. John Thune hosted a meeting between project representatives and the chair of the House of Representatives Water and Power Subcommittee, Rep. John Doolittle-CA. Rep. Thune opened the meeting by introducing the sixteen representatives of Lewis and Clark and gave a brief description of the project needs. He explained to Rep. Doolittle the urgency for a hearing in June. Project representatives then outlined their drinking water supply problems and why Lewis and Clark is their best alternative for the future.

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LYLE TRAUTMAN TRIBUTE



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Charlie Kuehl, Chairman LCRWS

As you can tell from reading this newsletter we have reason to be excited about the House hearing scheduled for June 18th. This is an important hearing and the first before a House Committee. We have a compelling story to tell in Washington. Our congressional delegations have worked hard to present our case. However, it is now up to the board and interested individuals to explain the dire needs of water issues facing the member systems.

Seems like only yesterday that a few communities and rural water systems gathered together at the South Dakota Association of Rural Water Systems' office to discuss the possibility of building a drinking water pipeline from the Missouri River. Many things have changed over the past eight years, but one thing has remained steadfast, our membership's commitment to seeing this project become a reality.

It is this spirit of dedication that has kept Lewis and Clark afloat as we have traveled the rough and tumble waters of Congress and our local legislatures. At a moment's notice, our membership has been willing to make the phone calls or write the letters to their elected decision makers asking them to continue in their support of Lewis and Clark. Sometimes this may even require driving several hundred miles to make that personal contact or request. With this kind of commitment, I know we will be successful in reaching our goal of federal authorization and construction of Lewis and Clark.

We all set out in life to accomplish something. And we work with others to make our lives and communities a safe and enjoyable place. This is what made Lyle Trautman a special person and a friend of ours. The Midwest prairie is where Lyle Trautman found his roots and pursued a higher quality of life for his family and neighbors - many who he never knew but cared enough to work on their behalf.

We have lost a true friend and leader in water development. Lyle's legacy and his luminating personality inspired us all to carry on with determination and resolve to develop water resources for everyone. He never yielded and was always ready for another meeting to convince lawmakers that their needs were real. He didn't understand the word "no."

Lyle's work in water development began as a member of the Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water Steering Committee in 1976. From 1979, after Lincoln-Pipestone came into operation, Lyle consistently offered his time and leadership as Vice Chairman and Chairman through 1997.

Lyle served as Vice Chairman and was the current Chairman of the Minnesota Rural Water Association. Lyle's work in water development didn't go unnoticed. He was awarded the Henry Walraven Award for his leadership contributions for the improvement of water and wastewater systems in southwestern Minnesota.

Lyle worked with many people in Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota

over the years. One of his closest friends and working partners was fellow Lewis & Clark Board Member, Red Arndt. Red recalls a few memorable times with Lyle:

"Lyle and myself spent many days in the last six or seven years in St. Paul lobbying for the Lewis & Clark water system. Lyle was always ready to do whatever had to be done to move the Lewis & Clark along. When we were

having a hard time in St. Paul making the legislators believe this project was needed Lyle said many times 'what's wrong with these people? Don't they realize that our people need water?'"

"That is one thing I found out about Lyle, is that he did care about what he was doing, he did care about making sure everyone had a good clean, abundant supply of water. He would call me when something would come up and say "Let's go talk to them in St Paul and set them straight". One of

the biggest pleasures I have had in the last 6 or 7 years is when one of the legislators called us the "water boys". To be recognized as a water boy with Lyle Trautman is just great."

We have grown because of him; we are more impassioned because of him; we know we will have to work a little harder without him. But most of all, we will miss him and his guiding energy and compassion. His light will always shine brightly on Lewis & Clark and Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water.



—Lyle Trautman



FEATURE SYSTEM

LUVERNE, MINNESOTA

Luverne is the County Seat of Rock County, and is located in the extreme southwest part of the state, approximately 25 miles east of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Conveniently located at the crossroads of Interstate Highway 90 and US Highway 75, residents enjoy all the benefits of small town living with easy access to the larger cities of Sioux Falls, Omaha and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Settled in the 1860s, Luverne sits in the valley of the Buffalo Ridge--blessed with a quiet beauty as it gently slopes to the Rock River. The surrounding prairie boasts some of the richest, most fertile cropland in the upper Midwest.

Luverne is a thriving community with a population of about 4,500. They are committed to pursuing new growth and economic vitality, while preserving the sense of history and pioneer culture that has brought them this far.

Luverne has always fought the water battle. They currently have sixteen wells and two filters serving the city. Normally, this number of wells could serve a city ten times this size except that these wells are very shallow. Most of the ground in the area has heavy rock formations and other areas have a very high water table, making it difficult to drill deep enough wells to meet their water needs.

The effort to develop water has always been at the top of the agenda for city

leaders. Currently, the city sells an average of 1.1 million gallons of water per day.

The city is currently building a two-phase filter upgrade project which will add an additional 3 new wells. The added capacity will provide them with additional water resources at a time when economic development opportunities are growing. The city's residential growth is adding twenty new homes per year.



—Rock County Courthouse



—Blue Mound State Park

As Luverne continues to grow and seeks new water sources for both residential, business and agriculture, they must find a new source of water that will provide the quality and quantity necessary to meet these demands. After considerable research and continued expansion of shallow wells, the source the city has determined that the Lewis & Clark Rural Water System is the only viable option that can meet their future water needs and at a price that is affordable to taxpayers.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Pam Bonrud, Exec. Director, LCRWS

Activities at the state legislative level are beginning to wind down. South Dakota's legislature approved a \$50,000 grant, the Iowa legislature agreed to a \$15,000 grant and a request for approximately \$10,000 from moneys appropriated to the Minnesota Joint Powers Group is under advisement with the Department of Natural Resources. All of these funds will be used to support Lewis and Clark with its administrative needs, project promotion and federal authorization activities. Thank you to each of the above for their continued confidence in Lewis and Clark.

Efforts to gain approval of our federal authorizing legislation are intensifying. We are in daily contact with our delegation and their staff to monitor committee and subcommittee actions. Letters from our six senators, three representatives and three governors have been sent to the Senate and House of Representatives committees asking the chairmen to proceed with moving our legislation along for full approval by Congress. We are still encouraged that Lewis and Clark will receive its federal authorization in the 105th Congress.

On a more personal note, Lewis and Clark suffered a tremendous loss recently when Lyle Trautman, board member representing the Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System from Lake Benton, MN and our treasurer for many years, passed away on March 10, 1998. Lyle was a dedicated board member and great supporter. We miss Lyle greatly and extend our sincerest sympathies to his family.

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A decision must be made as to how the GAO will handle the Bureau of Reclamation because the Bureau does not have a formal funding program for rural water systems. The Bureau's involvement with rural water construction is a direct result of laws passed by congress authorizing that agency to build specific projects. Criteria for funding and construction can vary with each authorization passed by Congress. This is in contrast to the more "traditional" funding programs that exists within EPA and USDA where very definable criteria for funding do exist.

GAO has promised that the study will be completed by May 31, 1998 to accommodate the short timeline remaining in Congress for authorization of LCRWS and the other projects. LCRWS and our congressional delegation will continue to work with Senator Kyl and committee members to seek markup of LCRWS federal legislation in June.

--House Hearings continued

At the conclusion of the meeting, Chairman Doolittle agreed to a hearing on June 18th. A hearing was held in the Senate in October of 1997. Though the board is optimistic about the meeting, they also realize the importance of the June hearing and are ready to explain the water problems that persist and the narrow timetable that exists to develop a new source of water for the twenty-two member systems.

"If the hearing is out of the way, it puts us that much further ahead," explained Pam Bonrud, Executive Director of Lewis & Clark Rural Water System. "It just makes it easier to move the bill. We are grateful for the work of our tri-state congressmen, especially Rep. John Thune and this personal commitment to working with Chairman Doolittle to get this hearing scheduled. He has gone to great lengths to get this hearing scheduled and we couldn't have done it without him."

"The purpose of this hearing is to inform other members of Congress about the vital need for the Lewis and Clark project and about the serious water needs facing this area," said Rep. John Thune. "This is an important first

step in the ongoing process of securing support for Lewis and Clark. I am committed to seeing this project completed, and this is a critical part of that process. This is the first House hearing ever held on the Lewis and Clark project and will go far in demonstrating the unique needs of the area and the importance of the plan."

The authorization bill is expected to go to the Senate first and then the House. The board feels confident about their chances for getting authorization before Congress adjourns this year.

A LOOK AHEAD

Next issue will include:

- Full Report on Annual Meeting
- Congressional Hearing
- Feature System