

Congress Approves Increased Rural Water Program Funding

Contact: Troy Larson, Executive Director - 605-368-2400 (work) and 605-310-0560 (cell)

December 20, 2019

Tea, SD – With House passage on December 17 and Senate passage on December 19, Congress approved the FY20 Budget. Thanks in large part to the strong support and leadership of the tristate congressional delegation, the budget includes an additional \$117.4 million for the Bureau of Reclamation’s (BoR) Rural Water Program. This is \$18.6 million more than Congress approved last year. **When combined with the slight funding increase proposed by the administration, it brings overall FY20 funding for the Rural Water Program to \$132 million; a \$19.5 million increase compared to FY19.**

Because of the earmark ban, it is now up to BoR to determine how to allocate the additional funding among five authorized rural water projects, including Lewis & Clark. It is anticipated Lewis & Clark likely will receive roughly the same percentage of the additional funding as last year, which would bring the project’s FY20 funding to approximately \$18 million; compared to \$15 million in FY19. An announcement from BoR on the allocation of funds is expected sometime between mid-January and early February.

“We are not going to count our chickens before they hatch, but the increased funding for the Rural Water Program should provide a big lift for Lewis & Clark as we keep construction moving forward. A big thank you to the tristate congressional delegation for their continued strong support and leadership! We would not be where we are today without them. Thanks as well to our great partners at the Bureau of Reclamation,” said Executive Director Troy Larson.

BACKGROUND:

Incorporated in 1990 and authorized by Congress in 2002, the non-profit Lewis & Clark Regional Water System includes 20 member cities and rural water systems in southeast SD, northwest IA and southwest MN (service area the size of Connecticut). Construction began in 2004 and the System became operational in July 2012. Water is currently being delivered to 15 members. Construction is estimated to be 82% complete. There are five more members yet to be connected – Sioux Center, Hull, Sheldon, Sibley and Madison. Lewis & Clark also needs to add more wells, treatment capacity and storage to reach its full capacity of 45 million gallons per day.

###