

Legislature Approves Additional Water Rights for Lewis & Clark

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The South Dakota Legislature overwhelmingly approved Senate Joint Resolution 502, which provides an additional 17.07 million gallons a day (MGD) of ground water rights to the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System (L&C) for its expansion to 60 MGD that is currently underway and is expected to be completed in 2031.

The Senate approved SJR 502 on January 23 and the House approved it on January 31. “A big thank you to Representative Tony Venhuizen of Sioux Falls and Senator Herman Otten of Tea for being the prime sponsors. They both did a great job in the committee hearings and on the floor of their respective chambers explaining the need for this additional capacity and responding to questions,” said Executive Director Troy Larson. In addition to committee testimony from the sponsors and Larson, testimony of support was also provided by the SD Department of Ag & Natural Resources (DANR), SD Association of Rural Water Systems, East Dakota Water Development District and the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce.

The SD Water Management Board is expected to take final action at either its March 6 or May 8 meeting. The Water Management Board at a July 14 hearing voted unanimously to recommend approval to the Legislature. State statute requires legislative approval on any request over 10,000 acre feet per year before the Water Management Board can take final action. L&C’s request equals 19,121 acre feet per year. “This is a rare occurrence as the last time legislative approval was needed was in 1994, and coincidentally that was also for Lewis & Clark,” said Larson.

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Attached photo shows Rep. Venhuizen (left) and Sen. Otten