



Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority
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April 1, 2019

Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives

Honorable Tom McClintock
Republican Leader
Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Huffman and Republican Leader McClintock:

On behalf of the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) in Eastern Montana, I write to urge you to include authorization of our DRWA Rural Water System in legislation your Committee passes into law this year. I appreciate this opportunity to submit information for your Subcommittee hearing entitled WOW 101: The State of Western Water Infrastructure and Innovation.

The DRWA has been working with the Bureau of Reclamation for over 14 years to authorize and build our critical regional drinking water system. When the Rural Water Supply Act was sunset in 2016, we became unable to continue our work. Currently, Reclamation has no authority to complete our Water System and we need Congressional action to finalize our project plans.

Once built, our Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority Rural Water System will treat and deliver quality water to nearly 30,000 people throughout the eastern Montana counties of Richland, Dawson, McCone, Garfield, and Prairie -- and McKenzie County in North Dakota.

The state of Western Water Infrastructure is dire in Eastern Montana. The sparsely available public water systems presently within our project boundaries are unable to meet the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act without extremely expensive, energy-intensive treatments. Additionally, fewer than 20% of those in our area are even eligible to receive water from one of the existing supply systems.

Eastern Montana has an urgent need for water infrastructure. Millions of people take quality water for granted when they step up to their sinks. The wells delivering water to homes in Eastern Montana produce substandard water, at best. What appears to be **mud** comes out of people's kitchen faucets in rural homes in our service area. The quality of current water available is so poor it cannot sustain a healthy existence for those living in our area. Residents are required to buy and haul their water in order to survive.



DRWA area - Samples from KITCHEN SINK TAPS

Water quality tests have been conducted on water sources in the service area. The Garfield County School District water well showed excessive fluoride and nearly twice the recommended level for both sodium and total dissolved solids. The raw water supplies currently supplying the Towns of Circle, Jordan, Richey, and Lambert are all over the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for fluoride and above the secondary limit for sodium. Additionally, the Town of Circle is experiencing a chronic bacterial growth problem in their wells that requires extensive rehabilitation and replacement.

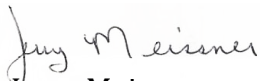
The proposed regional DRWA Water System will provide a responsible alternative to 6 existing, inadequate town water systems, will implement the very first public water system in another 9 towns, and thousands of additional rural people in Eastern Montana will have quality water readily available in their homes for the first time in history!


The DRWA Water System is a regional approach to the water quality problems in Eastern Montana. The System is a fiscally responsible option to secure clean drinking water, will increase property values, and will considerably improve the livelihood for residents in our service area.

DRWA has proven the cost of doing nothing with water in Eastern Montana would be over \$300 million MORE than the cost to build the DRWA Water System (\$687,755,728 over 50 years is the cost of current, unsafe water; compared to the cost of the DRWA Water System, which is \$347,493,267). This proves a National Economic Development (NED) ratio of 1.98. A ratio greater than 1 represents monetized benefits from the project. We need to build this drinking water system as Montanans deserve to have clean, safe drinking water running into their homes, schools, and businesses.

Our U.S. Representative Greg Gianforte introduced legislation, the Clean Water for Rural Communities Act (H.R. 967), to authorize Reclamation to finalize the DRWA Water System feasibility study so that authorization and construction can begin with the State's assistance. Senators Tester and Daines introduced the same legislation in the Senate again this year after the bill passed through the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in the last Congress. I enclose a letter signed by our entire Congressional delegation supporting this bill. We ask for your assistance in passing this bill into law and therefore bringing clean water to our homes in the west.

Sincerely,


Jerry Meissner
DRWA Chairman


Mandi Nay
DRWA Coordinator

Enclosure

