

**Statement of
Steve J. Lynn - District Manager
Midvale Irrigation District, Pavillion, WY**

**House Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries Subcommittee
of the Natural Resources Committee
Hearing on
H.R.3415 – “Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act”**

September 28, 2023

Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on H.R.3415 to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the Midvale Irrigation District the Pilot Butte Power Plant. It is my honor and pleasure to address you today.

My name is Steve J. Lynn, District Manager of the Midvale Irrigation District, located in Pavillion, Wyoming. The District was formed in 1921 and historically known as the Riverton Unit of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation. Major facilities of this unit are Bull Lake Dam and Reservoir, Pilot Butte Dam and Reservoir, Wind River Diversion Dam, and Pilot Butte Power Plant as well as 100 miles of main canals, 300 miles of lateral canals and approximately 650 miles of drains. Midvale is under contract with the Bureau of Reclamation to operate and maintain these transferred works.

The District serves approximately 73,000 acres of irrigable lands with direct flow water from the Wind River and stored water from Bull Lake and Pilot Butte Reservoirs.

Pilot Butte Reservoir is an off-stream facility fed by the Wyoming Canal, approximately 10 miles downstream of the Wind River Diversion Dam. The reservoir supplies the Pilot Canal which extends 38.2 miles, and irrigates the southern portion of the District.

The Pilot Butte Power Plant is located at the drop from the Wyoming Canal to Pilot Butte Reservoir. The plant began generating power in 1925 and has two generating units which operate under a maximum head of 105 feet with a total capacity of 1,600 kilowatts. Power was distributed over 76 miles of transmission lines. The plant was shut down on June 15, 1973, because of high operation and maintenance costs and penstock problems. The penstock was replaced, and the units were placed back in service in June 1990 and continued through 2008.

Following an economic analysis, the Bureau of Reclamation decided to shut down the power plant due to increasing operation and maintenance costs and needed plant repairs.

The Midvale Irrigation District has been interested in hydropower generation for many years and applied for a hydropower feasibility study through the Wyoming Water Development Commission. The Level II study published in June 2016 assessed the feasibility of developing hydropower on several of Midvale's drop structures and also assessed the feasibility of Midvale rehabilitating and operating the Pilot Butte Power Plant. The recommendations of the report considered most all of the power generation and appurtenant equipment had exceeded its useful life, and in need of replacement with modern power generation equipment.

The Pilot Butte Power Plant is referred to by Reclamation as "Reserved Works", meaning the facility and the appurtenant penstock and head gate are to be retained by Reclamation for its use in generating power income. The Reserved Works designation does not allow the facilities to be transferred by any other means but through an act of Congress.

As mentioned, the power plant has been shut down and mothballed since 2008 and a future plan for demolition was estimated by Reclamation at approximately \$5M several years ago. Additionally, Reclamation incurs mounting annual costs for maintenance and inspections of the facility even as it sits idle.

Midvale Irrigation District recognizes the mounting costs of the facility to Reclamation and is petitioning Congress to transfer the reserved works to the District for the opportunity to rehabilitate the building and purchase the new equipment to produce hydroelectric power during its irrigation season, which is approximately 6 months of the year. Ultimately the produced power would benefit the District's 940 water users in keeping with the goal of providing the maximum amount of available water to the District's constituents at the lowest reasonable cost each year. The property the Power Plant and appurtenances are located on is managed by the Midvale Irrigation District for Reclamation and is eligible for title transfer through the Dingell Act, as "Transferred Works", but the reserved works are not.

In closing, the Midvale Irrigation District is in support of the "Pilot Butte Power Plant Conveyance Act" and asks that it be supported by the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I'll gladly answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.