

**Testimony and Statement of Steven Jolly
Manager, Arbuckle Master Conservancy District
Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
H.R. 1219**

**The Arbuckle Project Maintenance Complex and District Office
Conveyance Act of 2015**

October 28, 2015

Good afternoon, my name is Steven Jolly. I am the manager of the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District. I am here today on behalf of the Board of Directors and water users of the District to provide background and information in support of H.R. 1219, legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain lands and buildings of the Arbuckle Project in Oklahoma to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District. We strongly support this legislation and thank the committee for considering it today.

Arbuckle Master Conservancy District

The district is located near Sulphur in South-Central Oklahoma. Early in 1956, local interests met with Reclamation representatives concerning potential development of the Rock Creek site. Members of the Oklahoma congressional delegation actively supported the Rock Creek Project and urged Reclamation to start investigations immediately. A reconnaissance investigation of the Rock Creek site, which became the Arbuckle Project, was initiated in 1956. Following review, the Southern Oklahoma Development Association (SODA) adopted the report findings. Reclamation prepared a plan of development in 1961 and completed a definite plan report in 1963, which was revised in 1964.

Project Authorization

The Arbuckle Project was authorized by an act of Congress, Public Law 87-594, 87th Congress, August 24, 1962 (76 Stat. 395). This act authorized the Arbuckle Project for storing, regulating, and furnishing water for M&I, domestic, flood control, and for the conservation and development of fish and wildlife, as well as enhancement of recreational opportunities.

Contracts

On March 19, 1964 the United States and the Water Conservation Storage Commission of the State of Oklahoma executed Contract 14-06-500-895 for financing construction of the Arbuckle Dam and Reservoir.

Subsequently, Contract 14-06-500-1412, dated May 26, 1967 was executed between the United States, Arbuckle Master Conservancy District, and Water Conservation Storage Commission of the State of Oklahoma for transferring and assigning a portion of the rights and obligations assumed by the commission under contract dated March 19, 1964 (Contract 14-06-500-895). This transaction provided for the repayment of the reimbursable costs of construction, operation, and maintenance in accordance with Reclamation Law by the District.

Construction

The contract for construction of Arbuckle Dam was awarded June 9, 1964 and was completed June 30, 1966. The contract for construction of the Wynnewood Aqueduct and pumping plant was awarded August 27, 1965 and was essentially complete in August 1967. Minor contracts for final completion of construction at Arbuckle Dam and the Wynnewood Aqueduct and Pumping Plant were completed during 1967 and 1968. Operation and maintenance (O&M) responsibility for the project was turned over to the District on January 1, 1968.

About January 14, 1967, the gates were closed. On May 12, 1968, water filled to the top of the conservation pool at an elevation of 872.0 feet.

First delivery of water was on August 8, 1967 to the Kerr-McGee Refinery, now the Wynnewood Refinery, north of the dam and reservoir. The refinery was very close to ceasing operations due to the lack of water when groundwater wells depleted. The aqueduct was completed just in time to prevent refining operations from being suspended.

Ardmore elected to participate in the project in 1968 and the first water was delivered on January 1979. The Ardmore contract was executed in 1971.

Legislation enacted in 1976 created the Chickasaw National Recreation Area and effectively transferred 6,895.9 acres from the Project to the National Park Service. This action resulted in a credit to the District and a revised repayment schedule, and the District's 50 year repayment obligation of \$6.5 Million to the Federal Government was repaid six years early in September of 2012.

H.R. 1219, the Arbuckle Project Maintenance Complex and District Office Conveyance Act of 2015

The act would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey title of certain federally owned lands and buildings to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District. The title would be conveyed to approximately 2.83 acres of land, a house, associated structures, and the headquarters office building. The house and property are used to accommodate a district employee who maintains and inspects the dam and pumping facilities. The headquarters office building is the base of operation for the District.

Title Transfer Process

It has been the desire of the District to obtain title to buildings and lands outlined in the legislation and owned by the United States for many years. In accordance with the Bureau of Reclamation policy framework for title transfer, the District began working with Reclamation in 2013 to investigate the process to complete title transfer. Reclamation and the District worked cooperatively and successfully to address all of the elements necessary to bring this legislation forward.

We then worked with Congressman Cole to introduce the legislation.

Benefits of This Title Transfer

The title transfer will give the District more local control of buildings which were constructed for our use. Transferring title will reduce the administrative burden on both the United States and the District when changes or improvements of the property and buildings are needed. The Bureau of Reclamation will no longer need to complete facility reviews of these transferred buildings and properties. They can direct personnel to more important activities. The District would not be eligible to receive any future cost-share benefits for the transferred facilities following conveyance of title from federal ownership to the District.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank several people who have made this transfer possible. Within the Bureau of Reclamation I would like to thank Commissioner Lopez for his support. Next is Mark Trevino, Area Manager, of the Texas-Oklahoma Office and his staff who worked hard to make the process successful. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Congressman Cole and his staff.

In summary, H.R. 1219 is a good bill, a good title transfer and shows a cooperative process of benefit to both Reclamation and the District. I urge the Committee to move this legislation forward.

This concludes my testimony; I would be pleased to answer any questions.