

Statement of John W. Keys, III
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of the Interior
on H.R. 4638
House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power
May 22, 2002

I am John Keys, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). I am pleased to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4638, concerning authorization of the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Supply Project. This Project serves the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Lower Brule Indian Reservations and seven counties in southwestern South Dakota. H.R. 4638 would increase the authorization ceiling for the Project and extend by five (5) years the time period for which appropriations are authorized. Since the Project cannot be completed unless these changes are made, the Department supports enactment of H.R. 4638.

The Mni Wiconi Rural Water Supply Project was authorized in 1988 (P.L.100-516) and included the Oglala Sioux Rural Water System, the Oglala Sioux Core System, the West River Rural Water System, and the Lyman-Jones Rural Water System. The Mni Wiconi Project was expanded in 1994 (P.L.103-434, Title VIII) to include the Rosebud Sioux and Lower Brule Sioux Rural Water Systems.

The authorizations intended construction to be completed within 10 years, and appropriations were authorized through 2003. However, annual appropriations have been insufficient to complete construction on the Project within the time-frame originally planned in the Final Engineering Report.

H.R. 4638 extends to the year 2008 the authorization for appropriations to complete the project. The bill also increases the authorized ceiling by \$58.8 million to cover expenses that were not identified until after the sponsors (the Oglala, Rosebud and Lower Brule Sioux Tribes and West River/Lyman-Jones Rural Water Systems) released their Final Engineering Report, plus estimated administrative costs related to the extension from 2003 to 2008.

Mr. Chairman, the Administration is firmly committed to completing the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Supply Project. If H.R. 4638 is not enacted, the authority for appropriations will expire in 2003; Project construction would be shut down and the full benefits of the Project would not be realized. Only a portion of the Project population would be served water. If the expiration date is extended without a corresponding increase in the cost ceiling, the project would have to be redesigned to determine which features could be constructed within the available ceiling. This unfortunate prospect may be averted if H.R. 4638 is enacted, and I reiterate the Department's support for the bill.

This concludes my statement, and I would be glad to answer any questions.

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