



GOVERNOR OF MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY

65102

JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON
GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 720
(573) 751-3222

October 20, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I strongly urge you to reject your Bureau of Reclamations' Missouri River out-of-basin transfer alternative in favor of the Red River Valley in-basin alternative. The decision on this project is now in your hands and I want to encourage you to choose the option with lower costs, fewer environmental impacts and lower environmental risk than the Missouri River alternative. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has proposed to spend over \$660 million to provide water supply to the eastern part of North Dakota and three cities in Minnesota. The alternative Reclamation has selected would not only set a dangerous precedent for inter-basin water transfers but would violate the letter and intent of the National Environmental Policy Act.

For decades North Dakota has sought to pump water from the Missouri River into the Red River of the North. Each attempt to transfer water from the Missouri River basin to the Red River basin has been rejected due to its enormous cost to federal taxpayers, the lack of justification and due to adverse environmental impacts and risks. In the Environmental Impact Statement, Reclamation admits that a lower cost option exists with fewer impacts to the environment. However, Reclamation failed to recommend the Red River Valley in-basin alternative for implementation as suggested by its own analysis. I will present just a few reasons why you should reject the inter-basin transfer alternative in favor of the Red River Valley Alternative.

Needs – The demands for water in the EIS were greatly inflated by Reclamation because of improper population studies and the assumption of economic growth matching Salt Lake City in the years leading to the Olympic Games. Even so, the Red River Valley alternative is sufficient to meet these overstated needs and will certainly meet the actual needs of those in the area.

Cost – The Missouri River alternative is over \$200 million more expensive than the Red River Valley alternative with a higher percentage of the costs borne by the federal government rather than local water users. Because the Red River Valley alternative could be built in phases as needed, it can result in even greater savings if, as expected, the water supply demands are lower than projected in the EIS. Over 90% of the costs of the Missouri River alternative are incurred very early in the process, before most of the anticipated benefit would be realized. This places more of the costs on taxpayers across the country rather than those using the water.

Immediacy – Increments of the Red River Valley alternative can be completed in a timely manner to provide immediate response to the water needs of the Red River Basin. Be assured that the Missouri River alternative will be challenged by Missouri, Manitoba, and environmental groups because it does not comply with NEPA and the incorrect and incomplete analyses used in the project plan formulation and EIS.

Environmental Impacts – Any alternative that proposes to use Missouri River water adds environmental impacts and risks. While Reclamation attempted to diminish the differences, the Missouri River alternatives showed greater adverse environmental impacts than in-basin alternatives. In the Draft Final EIS, Reclamation noted impacts to threatened and endangered species in the Missouri River basin yet in the Final EIS, these impacts were never addressed. Given the millions of dollars that your Department is spending to help these species recover, any project that creates negative impacts to threatened or endangered species must be very carefully scrutinized. In addition, an out-of-basin solution creates the risk of species transfer between the basins; a risk avoided entirely by the selection of the Red River Valley alternative.

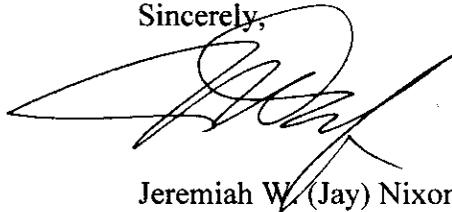
Supply – Reclamation refused to recognize that its Missouri River alternative presents additional risks to those in the Red River Basin. Analyses conducted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources show there would not be adequate water in Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota during a drought similar to that of the 1930s to operate the proposed diversion. Thus, at the time of the greatest need, it would be impossible to make Missouri River water available to those in the Red River Valley.

Water Use Conflicts - Finally, selection of the in-basin option avoids a precedent-setting battle pitting those living in the Missouri River basin against those who live outside the basin. In addition, such a diversion of water from the Missouri River would only exacerbate efforts to address the needs of that basin.

As Missouri's Governor, I will continue the work I began as Attorney General working with my Department of Natural Resources to ensure adequate and safe water supplies for our citizens. Together with our allies in Canada, Minnesota, and conservation groups, I strongly encourage you to sign a Record of Decision supporting the Red River Valley in-basin alternative.

Thank you for your time and attention to this most pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor