

Ravalli County Commissioners Office

From: Verdell <vjack@centurytel.net>
Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2015 1:28 PM
To: clerkred@3rivers.net; cmcdonald@mtintouch.net; cpohle@co.powell.mt.us; ctinsley@parkcounty.org; cwells@co.bighorn.mt.us; chouteau@itstriangle.com; chiefexec@bsb.mt.gov; clerkrecorder@prairie.mt.gov; c-a-sweet@centurytel.net; carolinesolomon2@gmail.com; commissioners@stillwater.mt.gov; commissioners@co.carbon.mt.us; commissioners@yellowstone.mt.gov; Ravalli County Commissioners Office; kculbeck@co.blaine.mt.gov; ccboland35@gmail.com
Cc: vjack@centurytel.net
Subject: FW: Video of CSKT Reservation
Attachments: Richard Simms Legislature Letter Quantification 011215 (2).pdf

Has it occurred to you that the CSKT Reservation has already received its federal reserved water with the construction of the Flathead Irrigation Project? Water is very plentiful because the federal reclamation project plan was to irrigate "all of the practicably irrigable acreage" estimated to be between 130,000 and 150,000 acres. This is consistent with the Hell Gate Treaty which emphasized agriculture and the federal reserved water rights which require quantification (justification) of the water which is to make the reservation productive. The other 6 tribal reservations in Montana were approved because they went through the process of identifying the purposes of the water, stating the amount, place of use, etc. The water was available and fit the purposes of the reservations. Since the CSKT Reservation has adequate water their emphasis is to control water both on and off their Reservation and lease most of the water they get from the Compact to others.

The attached video shows the federal reclamation project which begun in 1907 and was not completely finished until 1963. The project made the flat interior part of the Reservation extremely productive in producing vegetables, wheat, alfalfa, hay, oats and pasture. Much of the 1.3 million acre Reservation as you will see in the video is rugged mountains and valleys, numerous waterways and a large amount of natural lakes. Natural water is abundant on the Reservation and most of the land is irrigated with water from the Mission Mountains and natural water in streams which flow in from the mountains which surround the Reservation. The water from the Flathead River has to be pumped up 335 feet into the canals.

In 1904, Congress approved homesteading on the Reservation anticipating construction of the irrigation project to make it productive and provided for distribution of land and water rights free to tribal members, and sold land and water rights to non-tribal members. Farmers and ranchers were slow to take advantage of the irrigation because it was hard work transforming arid land into irrigation land. It took many years to develop the massive project into what it is now: 128,242 acres of irrigated land, 1,300 miles of canals, laterals, and distribution systems, 3 pumping plants, 15 storage reservoirs, and a power plant on the dam at Flathead Lake. Kerr dam and the generation power plant were started in 1926. CSKT is planning to purchase Kerr Dam this year for \$18 million.

Today the project serves as a multi-purpose water resource development. Currently, all existing reservoirs provide irrigation water for the project. Flathead Lake, Tabor, Jocko, Upper Dry Fork, Kicking Horse, Mission and Black Lake Reservoirs also provide a wide array of recreational activities, including fishing, boating, camping, and picnicking. The National Bison Range, at the southern end of the Flathead Reservation draws thousands of visitors each year for wildlife viewing and sightseeing. Unfortunately, the CSKT Compact will negatively impact 2000 irrigators on the Reservation and 330,000 people off Reservation in 11 counties. In the attached document, these impacts are evident in the Compact appendix which is analyzed by Richard Simms, a water attorney from New Mexico who has taken many water cases to the US Supreme Court during the last 35 years.
Former Senator Verdell Jackson, Kalispell.