

MILK RIVER BASIN WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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Town of Milk River
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Village of Coutts
Kerv Thiessen

Village of Warner
Bill Entzminger

County of Warner
Gordon Peterson

Cardston County
Terry Helgeson

County of Forty Mile
George Henline

Milk River Businessmen
Roy Hummel

Rural Water Co-ops
Donald Welsh

Recreation
Ken Brown

Milk River Irrigators
Ken Miller
Tom Gilchrist

Chair
Tom Gilchrist

Vice-chair
Ken Miller

Sec. Treas.
Donald Welsh

July 16, 2004

Secretary, Canadian Section
IJC
234 Laurier Avenue West, 22nd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6K6

Attn: Michelle Tracey

Dear Ms. Tracy:

Attached please find our submission to the IJC hearings concerning the Milk and St. Mary rivers.

Please allocate a time allotment for a verbal presentation at Lethbridge, AB on Thursday, July 29, between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m.

Yours sincerely
~~Tom Gilchrist~~
Tom Gilchrist
Chair
MRBWMC

SUBMISSION TO THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

With respect to

THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE ST. MARY AND MILK RIVERS

Prepared by

MILK RIVER BASIN WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The MRBWMC is a group “dedicated to the further development of the water resource of the Milk River to strengthen the economy of Southern Alberta”. The Committee members represent the Counties of Forty Mile, Warner and Cardston, the town of Milk River and the villages of Coutts and Warner, the business community, the recreation providers on the river, the rural water co-ops and the irrigators using the river as a water source. The Committee is also represented on the advisory council of the Milk River International Alliance, the voice of the Montana water users on the Milk River downstream of Havre, MT.

The Committee was formed in January 2002 to revive plans for storage in the Milk River Basin in Alberta in response to the extreme drought conditions of the previous 2 years. Those drought conditions caused zero natural flow to occur in the Milk River at various times between August and December. The Committee used the work done from 1978 to 1986 by a previous group pursuing storage development in the basin as the basis for the current initiative.

The Committee is the proponent of a storage facility in the Milk River Basin in Alberta that would allow basin residents to utilize the average annual 45,000 dam³ of water apportioned to Alberta that is currently unavailable primarily because of lack of storage.

At the request of the Committee, Alberta Environment has completed a preliminary feasibility study. One on stream site and several off stream sites were evaluated. The proposed alternative project designs capture major flood flows for regulated release and respect the Boundary Waters Treaty Act apportionment agreement.

A storage site on the Milk River 12 miles west of the Town of Milk River provides the largest range of benefits to basin residents in Alberta, i.e.

1. Security of supply for municipal water to serve 3 urban centers and 5 rural water co-ops.
2. Some recreation enhancement on the river and new reservoir based activity.
3. Maintenance of minimum in stream flows for aquatic habitat in fall and winter.
4. Some flood protection especially for Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park.
5. A secure water supply for present basin irrigators using the river as a water source.
6. Expansion of the irrigated area in the basin using the river as the conveyance channel for pumping to adjacent lands.

The report is currently under review within Alberta Environment.

If the residents of the Milk River Basin in Alberta and Montana are to fully utilize the current apportioned volumes of water to maximum advantage, an improved dialogue must be established between Alberta and Montana. That initial dialogue could put a committee in place with enough resources to bring together the flow data of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers. That data could form the base for a visioning exercise to look at “what if” scenarios of managed flow patterns associated with proposed storage development in Alberta and Montana. Those scenarios would respect the apportionment rules. Key elements of the process should include

1. Proposed storage on the Milk River in Alberta with several capacities.
2. Proposed upgrades to Fresno reservoir in Montana.
3. Proposed renovations of the existing St. Mary diversion works, siphons and canal at a range of capacities.
4. Storage on the St. Mary River down stream of the present siphon location.

The scenarios need to be developed respecting the current Boundary Waters Treaty and the 1921 IJC Order. However, consideration should be given to adjusting the balancing formula to optimize the available annual water supply to all basin users on both sides of the border.

Time is important because decisions need to be made on both sides of the boundary to remove as much of the risk as possible with respect to secure, stable water supplies for urban and agricultural use.

Respectfully submitted

Tom Gilchrist, Chair
MRBWMC
July 16, 2004