SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 1/21/2005
BILL NO. SB 233

Mr. Chairman, committee members. My name is Buzz Mattelin from Culbertson and I have made the 450 mile trek to Helena today to speak in support of SB 233.

I am a farmer who irrigates out of the Missouri River about 80 miles downstream of Fort Peck Dam. About 15 years ago I became involved with Missouri River issues because of an erosion siltation problem that I had on my farm. I soon found that my problems with erosion and siltation were not unique to my farm, and that most of the landowner, operators below Fort Peck had similar problems. Soon we began a grass roots effort to mitigate the problems along the Missouri River below Fort Peck, an effort that began a 15 year journey that has brought me here today. During the past 15 years our grass roots group has become known as the Lower Missouri Coordinated Resource Management Council (LoMoCRM) of which I am the present chair. The LoMo CRM has established working relationships with , U.S.Army Corps of Engineers(COE), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, E.P.A., Natural Resources and Conservation Service, Agriculture Research Service, Fort Peck Tribes, and numerous State and County governmental agencies. During the past 15 years we have come to better understand the effects of reservoir releases from Fort Peck Dam , the effects of winter flows under an ice cover, we have inventoried the 53,000 acres of irrigation and their associated water intakes which contribute 20-25 million dollars each year to our local economy, we worked with NRCS to mitigate the problems associated with the proposed "spring rise" for the endangered pallid sturgeon, we worked on the revision the COE's master water control Manual through the Missouri River Basin Association. Etc. etc.

Why then if the LoMoCRM has been so effective do we need SB233?

Because the LoMoCRM is only one piece of the puzzle. Other groups that represent various Fort Peck Lake issues, State agencies representing wildlife and water quality issues, the Fort Peck Tribes, all have strong feelings about management of the Missouri River. Often the management desires of these groups and agencies are in direct conflict with each other.

A couple of examples: first, the revised Master Water Control Manual authorizes a Missouri River Recovery Implementation Program (MRRIP) which in the President's budget provides 70 million dollars for recovery on the Missouri River from Three Forks Montana to St. Louis, Mo., this is the first year that any recovery money could be spent above the channelized portion of the River. As you might guess there is a lot of competition for these dollars. Last summer a COE project manager that our CRM works with said "Montana wants all the money to go toward endangered species recovery" I asked what made him believe that, that was Montana's position. He then faxed me a copy of a letter that Missouri River Natural Resource Committee (MRNRC) had sent to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, signed by most of the basin's Fish Wildlife and Parks agencies including Montana's. In short our COE project manager had mistaken Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks position for the "Montana's" position.

Second, throughout the past summer the COE in their press releases continually justified draining Fort Peck Lake to supply downstream irrigators. I wish that it were true that the downstream irrigators had that much clout with the COE, the fact is the COE played Lake people against River people, the old divide and conquer scheme.

So what is the official position of the State of Montana on Missouri River management?

Who knows, the Governor sends comments on the annual operating plan, but so do several other State agencies. Several citizen groups comment on lake and river issues, but none have a holistic approach. The director of Mt DNRC is the delegate to the Missouri River Basin Association, but is not often in harmony with the MT FWP delegate to the MRNRC. Montanans against Montanans makes for a good football game each year but not a good recipe for positively influencing Missouri River management.

I believe that SB233 is the right recipe. SB233 provides a forum for all lake and river interests to express their concerns and recommendations for crafting a united Montana position on Missouri River management.

I urge you to pass and fund SB233.

Question?