



Montana Economic Developers Association

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March 21, 2007

House Appropriations Committee
Montana House of Representatives
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear House Appropriations Committee Members:

The Montana Economic Developers Association, representing over 200 economic and community development practitioners from across our state, is writing to express our support for House Bill 222. This legislation will properly fund a much-needed economic analysis of the value of irrigated agriculture in Montana. We believe that the potential for irrigated agriculture to enhance our state's economy is strong, particularly for our rural areas.

This legislation will help to quantify the positive economic impact of properly-planned irrigation projects on Montana's economy and includes both new developments as well as those requiring rehabilitation.

As we look to enhance the ability of Montana's rural areas to become economically competitive and to reverse the trend of out migration and business stagnation, it is important to look toward the proper utilization of our state's natural resources, including the role of irrigation, as a way to sustain communities, create jobs and instill hope for our residents. A well-developed plan that focuses on the economic potential of irrigation will add tremendously to Montana's ability to actively engage in value-added agriculture opportunities for our state.

MEDA encourages your strong support for HB 222. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Rick Edwards
MEDA President

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