

**HB 629 Written TESTIMONY**  
**Peter Plant, Assistant Manager/Hydrologist**  
**FIIP, St. Ignatius, MT**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My Name is Peter L. Plant. I am the Assistant Manager/Hydrologist for the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP). I am writing in support HB 629 and respectfully encourage you to pass this bill out of committee and into the open legislative chamber for greater debate and open vote.

The FIIP Project Manager and I are responsible for incorporating and carrying out the policies of the Cooperative Management Entity (CME) in the daily operations of the FIIP. The CME is the local management Board for the FIIP. It is comprised of four members appointed by the Flathead Joint Board of Control (FJBC) and four members appointed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Tribal Council.

Recently there have been some FIIP employees who have stated publicly they work for the FIIP and have announced their opposition to the Water Use Agreement (WUA) which will be an attachment to the Compact. As the managers of FIIP, we want to clarify to this audience, and to the public, that these employees neither represent nor are authorized to speak on behalf of the FIIP or the CME.

Because the CME Board is comprised of both FJBC and CSKT members, chief negotiating parties to the Water Use Agreement, both the FIIP Project Manager and I remained neutral during the negotiating process. We did however evaluate the WUA from a technical standpoint concerning water management and project operations, and provided comments during the review process; and we feel that our concerns were fairly reviewed and addressed in the final WUA agreement.

We have witnessed the FJBC and CSKT negotiate in good faith to come to this Water Use Agreement. The negotiating parties believe that the WUA is a good compromise for all. We as FIIP managers concur. We believe the WUA provides waterusers with the certainty of a water right for irrigation based on sound science as well as observed historical use by FIIP. The WUA also provides a mechanism for the FIIP to accomplish much needed improvements necessary to

achieve modern operational efficiency and reduce water losses. We also believe that the specified flows and farm turnout allowances can be successfully managed for all. Keeping in mind that instream flow changes, river diversion allowances, and farm turnout allowances do not take effect until much of the proposed betterment and rehabilitation projects are underway; and that under the most expedited process these changes will be several years down the road. Under this scenario, we as managers and operators at FIIP will have adequate time to implement more efficient water delivery methods and adjust to the changes.

Again, FIIP management supports the aforementioned WUA compromise and the CSKT WATER COMPACT and encourages this committee to pass HB 629.

Thank you.