

STATEMENT OF VERN W. BUTLER, MANAGER-ENGINEER, EAST DAKOTA CONSERVANCY SUBDISTRICT

Mr. BUTLER. Senator McGovern and Senator Burdick, my name is Vern W. Butler, engineer for the East Dakota Conservancy Subdistrict with headquarters in Brookings, S. Dak. I am speaking here on behalf of the board of directors of the East Dakota Conservancy Subdistrict.

East Dakota is one of five such conservancy subdistricts established in South Dakota. We are a sister organization to the Oahe Conservancy Subdistrict, one of the local sponsoring entities for the proposed Oahe irrigation project. Like Oahe, the East Dakota Subdistrict was organized by a favorable vote of the people within its area. As such we are a political subdivision of the State of South Dakota with our own governing body, taxing authority, funds, duties, and responsibilities. Our primary interest is in full multiple-purpose water resources development. The subdistrict is governed by a board of 11 directors, each locally elected for 4-year terms. Certain directors represent urban areas, others represent rural areas.

The area covered by the East Dakota Subdistrict includes $11\frac{1}{2}$ counties in extreme eastern South Dakota—essentially the Big Sioux River drainage. All $11\frac{1}{2}$ counties are outside the immediate area directly affected by the proposed Oahe irrigation project. Unfortunately most of the Big Sioux River Basin lies 400 to 500 feet above the James River Valley so it will be more difficult to get Missouri River water into the Big Sioux River Valley. However, this is a possibility that is not being overlooked.

Although the East Dakota Conservancy Subdistrict covers only 10 percent of the area of the State, approximately 30 percent of the State's people and 29 percent of the State's property tax base are within the subdistrict. The major processing and distributing centers are Sioux Falls and Watertown both of which receive raw products from, and distribute consumer goods to people in the area proposed for Oahe irrigation. Many of the people of eastern South Dakota utilize the existing Missouri River mainstem dams and reservoirs for recreational purposes. Proposed recreation and fish and wildlife developments associated with the Oahe project would also be used by eastern South Dakota people.

Irrigation of large acreages as proposed in the Oahe project would help the economy of South Dakota primarily by reducing the fluctuations of agricultural income. As you know, South Dakota is in an area of sparse rainfall. Some years, when conditions are right, abundant crops can be raised and considerable livestock handled in the James River Valley, but in other years when it doesn't rain much or it doesn't rain at the right times, drought occurs, crop production is cut, and livestock must be sold. This reduces prices and income. Such conditions have a deterrent effect, even on those farmers several hundreds of miles away, as well as on the businessman and supplier of the hard-hit farmer. Developments and investments that will reduce these widely fluctuating conditions are needed. Irrigation is an answer. The stabilization of farm production and prices would do much to upgrade our way of rural life.