

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., November 27, 1967.

Hon. HENRY M. JACKSON,
Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR JACKSON: This responds to your request for the views of this Department on S. 670, a bill "To reauthorize the Riverton extension unit, Missouri River Basin project, to include therein the entire Riverton Federal reclamation project, and for other purposes."

We recommend that this bill be enacted, if amended as suggested herein.

The Riverton project was first authorized as an Indian project by the Act of March 2, 1917 (39 Stat. 969). It was placed under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation by the Act of June 5, 1920 (41 Stat. 874, 915); the first and second divisions of the project, encompassing some 45,000 acres of irrigable land, were brought in during the next 20 years. The general plan of development of the third division of the project was reauthorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 887), under the designation "Riverton extension unit of the Missouri River Basin project." Because of the difference in time between the construction of the third division and the first two divisions of the project, the third division has been more or less consistently treated as a separate entity by Congress. S. 670 would reauthorize the entire unit and establish the consolidated unit as a part of the Missouri River Basin project.

The third division presently contains 11,831 irrigable acres of which 8,913 acres are presently capable of sustained production under irrigation and 2,918 acres will require construction of drains or other betterment works to be capable of sustained production under irrigation. All but a small portion of this acreage is presently owned by the United States, which acquired the lands under the provisions of Public Law 88-278 (78 Stat. 156). These lands were acquired because of the serious financial and production problems which had been encountered by the landowners on this unit. One purpose of S. 670 is to permit the Secretary to dispose of these lands in such a way as to permit their use and development in an orderly and economic manner.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission now administers 10,539 acres of public lands on the Riverton project under a General Plan as provided for in the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661-666c. It has also acquired fee title to 2,280 acres of deeded land on the project. The Commission has a long-range general plan for the expansion of fish and wildlife facilities in the project area, under which it will ultimately acquire an additional 7,000 acres of deeded land and add approximately 7,830 acres of public lands presently withdrawn by the Bureau. In addition, more than 10,000 acres of aquatic habitat would be developed under the general plan for fish and wildlife purposes.

The total cost of this fish and wildlife development, when completed, would be approximately \$1.5 million, of which the State Game Commission had expended approximately \$376,000 of its own funds through 1965.

The policies which have recently been approved by the Congress in Public Law 89-72, the Federal Water Project Recreation Act, favor the inclusion of fish and wildlife conservation and development and recreation as project purposes if cost-sharing arrangements can be made with appropriate non-Federal agencies. The Act specifically authorizes construction of recreation facilities at existing reclamation projects. Inclusion of fish and wildlife conservation and development and recreation as purposes of the Riverton unit would bring this unit more nearly in line with the multiple-purpose authorization of the Missouri River Basin project.

Section 1 of the bill would reauthorize the entire Riverton project as a unit of the Missouri River Basin project. This would permit the consolidated project to be placed under one contracting organization, the Midvale Irrigation District, now administering the first two divisions. That District would absorb the lands of the third division and would assume operation and maintenance responsibility for the project works.

Subsection 2(a) of S. 670 would authorize the Secretary to replace all existing repayment contracts by a single amendatory repayment contract with the Midvale Irrigation District.

Subsection 2(b) authorizes a 50-year repayment period for the amendatory contract.