

Testimony of Erling A. Juel, District Manager for the Greenfields Irrigation District, in support of H.R.6369, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife, May 12th, 2022

My name is Erling Anthony Juel. I am the District Manager for the Greenfields Irrigation District (GID) located in Fairfield, Montana. I am testifying today in support of H.R. 6369 which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to amend the project authorization for Reclamation's Sun River Project to include hydroelectric power generation. This authorization amendment is important to Greenfield's Irrigation District as it would correct a discrepancy that has existed since the late 1920s. In the long run, this bill would also facilitate and expedite the District's efforts to developed hydropower generation on the existing Gibson Dam which comprises part of GID's irrigation infrastructure.

In 1905, the original Sun River Project authorization was for that of a single-purpose project; that being irrigation. However, in the mid-1920s, the final storage reservoir and dam was constructed for Greenfields as part of that project. Gibson Dam, built between 1926 and 1929, was designed to include provisions for future hydropower generation. And power penstocks were incorporated into the construction of the dam.

Unfortunately, after the dam was constructed, Reclamation did not amend the original project authorization to reflect this new, additional capability afforded the District. Amending the project authorization for the Sun River Project to include hydropower generation on the existing Gibson Dam would enable Reclamation to act as the authorizing entity for the development of hydropower generation on a Reclamation-owned dam. This authorization amendment will also facilitate, expedite, and enable the Greenfields Irrigation District to finalize their long-standing efforts and desire for such generation.

Since its construction, the District has been fully responsible for the operation and maintenance of Gibson Dam because GID is a transferred works project with Reclamation. In fact, the District is 100% responsible for all the maintenance costs for all the irrigation infrastructure comprising GID. This financial responsibility also includes the eventual replacement of its aging infrastructure. This is the biggest challenge facing GID. The cost to achieve this objective is estimated to cost between \$80 and \$95 million dollars and cannot be done on the backs of the local agricultural producers.

The ability for the District to develop clean, "green", reliable, and renewable energy will produce a revenue stream which is critically needed for the District. This source of income will allow GID to modernize, overhaul, and replace its 100-year-old irrigation infrastructure. By finalizing efforts to develop hydropower on Gibson Dam, the District will become self-sufficient thus allowing it to self-fund future infrastructure replacement projects.

Again, this bill would correct a 100-year-old deficiency that should have been completed when Gibson Dam was designed and constructed to support future hydropower generation thus expanding GID's capability beyond irrigation. Also, passage of this bill will empower Reclamation as the licensing authority for hydropower development on a Reclamation-owned dam and allow the Greenfields Irrigation District to realize its long-term goal for finalizing this potential. The revenue stream to be realized by the District will go to fund the +\$80 million dollars in infrastructure replacement projects necessary to ensure the District's viability for future generations of agricultural producers.