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Presentation to the International Joint Commission

Eastend Saskatchewan

July 28, 2004

Irrigation on the Ranch

The importance of Irrigation to our lively hood in Alberta

History

My great grandfather moved to Lethbridge Alberta in 1885. He moved to our ranch north of Bow Island in 1900. Our family started irrigating out of the South Saskatchewan River almost right away. We have continuously been irrigating forage, cereal and oilseed crops ever since.

S.M.R.I.D.

In 1954 our land back from the river came under the S.M.R.I.D.. We started irrigation on 640 acres at that time. We have invested steadily in irrigation ever since, land levelling, ditch construction, reservoirs, and lots of sprinkler equipment has been a steady drain on our cash supply. The economic viability of our whole farm depends on irrigation, using water from the St. Mary river. The economic viability of our whole community is based on water from the St. Mary river. We have relied on the continued supply of water to justify our investment and make our life decisions on.

Productivity

The productivity of my farm and ranch would be about 1/3 of what it is now if I did not have irrigation. We need about 80 irrigated acres to produce winter feed for our 180 cows, under dry land it would take about 250 acres. The multitude of crops we can grow under irrigation makes for a prosperous community of several thousand instead of several hundred.

Good Faith

The people of southern Alberta have relied with good faith on the share of the St. Mary river water they have been receiving over the last 100 years (48 years in the eastern areas). Southern Alberta has taken irrigation to the maximum in technology. Albertans are maximizing the benefit that can be obtained from the waters of the St. Mary river. The limiting factors to production in southern Alberta are now genetic and climatic. No better use for the St. Mary river water can be found than the uses it is being put to in southern Alberta.

Recommendation

The 1921 Order as been fair and productive for 83 years. The Order has been implemented for 83 years it can't be that hard to administer. The Irrigation areas of Alberta have changed significantly since 1920 but we have adapted and made the most of our share and are willing to live within the existing rules. The 1921 Order should remain unchanged. Alberta has relied in good faith on the existing water share and has used it to the maximum benefit possible.

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