

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 17, 2020

Michael S. Black  
Regional Director, Missouri Basin and Arkansas Rio Grande Texas Gulf Regions  
Bureau of Reclamation  
United States Department of Interior  
2021 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North  
Billings, MT 59101

Dear Regional Director Black:

We write on behalf of the Gering Ft. Laramie Irrigation District to respectfully request the Bureau of Reclamation designate the extraordinary maintenance work scheduled for the Tunnel #3 repairs to be determined emergency work under 43 U.S.C. 510b(c).

We appreciate the Bureau of Reclamation's ongoing assistance with securing funding to assist the affected Irrigation Districts with the temporary repairs needed to return water to the canal system. We further appreciate the Bureau providing technical assistance and conducting inspections of the tunnel and canal system. The inspection report conducted by the Bureau on August 7, 2019, classifies certain component deficiencies where immediate action is required before the start of the next irrigation season. These designations clearly place the Irrigation District in a situation where funding is required to be secured immediately in order to begin collecting bids, hiring a contractor, engineering and procuring materials to repair the deficiencies.

We are extremely grateful for the \$2.3 million the Bureau was able to secure for the District under the extraordinary operations and maintains work in 43 U.S.C. 519b(b) as a loan. However, we respectfully request the Bureau review the designation and determine the emergency extraordinary operations and maintenance authority under 43 U.S.C. 510b(c) applies to the District for the immediate repairs to properly address the deficiencies and ensure structural and operational safety and integrity of the tunnel. As you know, the emergency designation would allow 35% of the funds to be considered a grant and 65% to be reimbursable to the Bureau as a loan. This emergency determination would allow the District to meet the immediate needs to ensure water for the 2020 crop season. This area covered by the District receives fewer than 16 inches of average annual precipitation and is dependent on this surface water irrigation for over 150,000 acres of cropland in Nebraska and Wyoming.

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Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Ben Sasse  
United States Senator



Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



Adrian Smith  
Member of Congress

CC:

Carlie Ronca  
Area Manager, Wyoming Area Office  
Bureau of Reclamation  
United States Department of Interior  
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