

Chairman Monson and Committee members,

I'm Thomas Wheeler, farmer at Ray, 40 miles from Montana and 60 miles from Canada. I am representing ag producers, irrigators, farmers and ranchers. I termed out of advisory board last December but was asked to present here today. For those not aware we have a joint advisory board with Eastern Ag Research center at Sidney Montana. Many of the same crops are raised on both sides of the border. The collaboration has worked very well.

The USDA Agricultural Research Service in Sidney, Montana uses some of Nesson Valley irrigation acres for research also.

A high priority for WREC is a Technology Transfer Center at Nesson Valley Irrigation site 25 miles east of Williston. This building would house a conference room, small lab, several offices, seed sample storage, men's and women's bathrooms, and a shop.

In McKenzie and Williams counties there is an irrigation frontier of 400,000 plus acres that could be irrigated. The water for this would come from Yellowstone and Missouri rivers and also Lake Sakakawea. Some water could also come from aquifers in the area.

You will notice that the request now is different from the SBARE numbers. Both Oakes and Nesson need good facilities to further irrigation research and development

The Senate has approved another \$400,000 in funding and also has raised the cap on special funds we can raise.

One stumbling block we always run in to is the Bakken Premium. Everything costs more and sometimes can't even get a bid. There is not a person in North Dakota that does not benefit from the oil produced in western North Dakota. But there is not a mechanism in the system to help us with the extra costs. The only place to help alleviate this disparity is in this legislative process.

The need for research is here, the acres are here. A nice facility helps hire and retain great employees. We are always competing with the oil industry for employees.

I support the funding and direction provided in Senate bill 2020. Please help Ag Producers get the building that is needed at Nesson Valley.

Thank you for your consideration. Thank you for all the help you have given us in the past

Will take answer any questions.

Thomas Wheeler

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