

3/10/1977

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
HOUSE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND IRRIGATION COMMITTEE
MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 10, 1977
10:05 a.m.
Rm. 434
State Capitol Bldg.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Day, with all members present.

Senator Jergeson, chief sponsor of SB 99, explained that this bill would extend the saline seep control program for another 2 year period, terminating on July 1, 1979. He stated that 60 acres had been lost in one area, near his home, and he felt a definite need for the continuance of this program. The fiscal note for a total of \$537,786, has been cut from the original estimate of \$654,000.

PROPOSERS:

Mr. Roger Veseth, Department of State Lands, showed the committee a map of the sections in Montana that are affected by saline seep. There are 170 thousand acres out of production because of saline seep. He stated that the program had been re-evaluated and revised in the last two years to better evaluate the development in saline seep research.

Mr. Marvin Miller, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, explained that research was being done on 27 sites to regulate the water quality and how bad the quality of the water really is. He gave an example of a farmer who lost 5 head of cattle from the salt content in a reservoir. He explained the amount that should be contained in the water and the amount that was found. The most serious problems now are in the Chinook, Shelby, and Highwood Bench areas. More study and research is necessary to find out just how serious the problems are. Changing the farming system needs to be done over a larger percent of the area to evaluate the problems.

Representative Gene Ernst, explained that he operated a farm-ranch in the Judith Basin, which was one of the areas with a saline seep problem. He stated that the research and recommendation of previous saline seep programs have been helpful. He had used flexible cropping for control and had much success. Although many problems arose with the flexible cropping system and continued research is necessary. (prepared statement attached)

Mr. Jim L. Krall, Montana Agriculture Experiment Station, explained that the University's role and his association with saline seep control was to derive and implement dryland cropping systems and associated technology that will be useful in the control and spread of saline seeps. He felt that they had a handle on the problem but there are still questions to be answered. Some of the problems mentioned by Mr. Krall were, weeds and volunteer grains, fertilizer application, seeding methods, alternate crops, time and reclamation. One of the new systems being tried is seeding in the frost. Attached are explanations of the problems and what has been used to correct them. In summary Mr. Krall stated that the funding in the past was greatly appreciated and the continuance would help tremendously.

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Just because we have a handle on the problem it will be many years before we can control saline seep.

Mr. Peter Jackson, representing the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, was present to show the support of the association and explain that they have been working with the Department of State Lands on grass species.

Mr. Ron Bokma, Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Council on Saline Seep, explained that the budget had been cut to the minimum and seven local associations and farmers had also raised money for research to control saline seep, in the Highwood Bench area. The councils job was to compile information and get it distributed to the farmers. They had compiled a book which was the best in the world and each year have compiled additional informational booklets. They had a lot of information and would like to see the continuance of the program. (attached information sheet)

Mr. Donald Wigen, Highwood Alkali Control Association, said thanks for the work that had been done and impressed the work that still needed to be done on saline seep.

Mr. Arnold Gettel, Teton Ridge Alkali Association, felt there was a need for more research on special recharge areas, to spot special areas where the problems are coming from.

Mr. Hayden Ferguson, Montana Agriculture Experiment Station, stated that he had started with the beginning of the saline seep research in the fall of 1968, and the spring of 1969. He felt he was the oldest of the researchers in the state and had kept close track of the saline seep research and development. He knew there was a need for further study, or there will be a chance of us being forced back to annual cropping, unless we strive ahead to control the problems.

Chairman Day called for opponents, seeing none, Senator Jergeson closed with a, be concurred in, recommendation.

Representative Gunderson asked if the budget had been cut as much as possible? Senator Jergeson stated that it had been cut as much as possible from the original estimate of \$650,000.

Representative Bengtson, asked what was figured for the growth of the project and the amount of people that would be employed in the next 2 year period. Mr. Veseth replied, that the employees at the Agriculture Experiment Station was reduced from 2 1/2, full time employees to 1 1/2. The only new employee would be a weed control expert. A 17% increase from the last biennium.

Representative Johnston asked why the two year limit was put on the program if it were needed for a longer period than that? Senator Jergeson replied, so the legislature could review the progress being made on the research and development.

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Representative Conroy asked what had been seeded in the frost? Mr. Krall replied, barley and spring wheat have been seeded as early as the 28th of February.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Representative Johnston moved SB 99, be concurred in. It was seconded by Representative Gunderson. Representative Johnston amended his motion to, be concurred in and re-referred to Finance and Claims Committee. The motion was passed unanimously.

Representative Gunderson moved SB 89, be concurred in as amended. Representative Johnston seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously.

The amendments that had been passed at an earlier meeting to SB 89, are as follows: Third reading copy be amended as follows:

1. Amend title, line 5.

Following: "TRANSFER"

Insert: "OF OWNERSHIP"

2. Amend page 1, section 1, line 16.

Following: "transfer"

Insert: "of ownership"

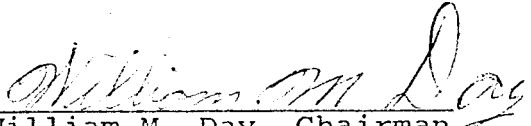
3. Amend page 2, section 2, line 4.

Following: "transfer"

Insert: "of ownership"

Representative Ellerd will carry SB 89, and Representative Dassinger will carry SB 99, on second reading.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.


William M. Day, Chairman

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