MINUTES OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON WATER February 19, 1981

The Select Committee on Water convened at 1:00 p.m. on February 19, 1981 in Room 436 of the Capitol with Chairman AUDREY ROTH presiding. All members were present.

HB 670.

The hearing on HB 670 was opened by REP. CURTISS, the purpose of the bill being to ensure effective utilization of the potential of the agricultural lands in Montana by reserving limited amounts of ground water necessary for their continued development. She said that millions of dollars are being spent in other states to protect water rights, and she felt that Montana should do the same.

PROPONENTS:

BILL ASHER, representing the Agricultural Preservation Association, the Park County Legislative Association, Sweetgrass County Preservation Association, Stillwater County Agricultural Legislative Association (EXHIBIT I) went on record as supporting this bill.

RAY BECK, representing the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, said that his group supports the concept contained in the bill. (EXHIBIT II)

OPPONENTS:

GARY FRITZ, of the DNRC, presented written testimony in opposition of the bill (EXHIBIT III).

WILLA HALL, representing the League of Women Voters, appeared in opposition of the bill. (EXHIBIT IV)

REP. CURTISS closed the hearing on the bill.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE:

REP. KEMMIS asked for the intent of the bill. REP. CURTISS said that it is to make sure that there will be enough water for agricultural purposes. REP. Kemmis said he saw no reference to agricultural uses. He wondered if industry wouldn't also be able to get water by this bill. REP. CURTISS said yes, as long as agriculture has enough and so that no aquifer would be depleted.

REP. KEMMIS asked if the permit would have to be for use on a particular piece of land or if it would be transferrable. REP. CURTISS thought it would be restricted for use on a particular piece of land. MR. FRITZ agreed.

REP. HUNNEKENS asked for the DNRC's opinion about sections 1 and 2. GARY FRITZ said the bill would give the DNRC authority to apply for and reserve water, and it (DNRC) has done so in the past. The bill sets the DNRC up as a middle man.

It doesn't set up a permit, he said, but a way to gain a priority date.

REP. ASAY said that "first in time, first in line" seems to be contradicted in this bill.

REP. HUENNEKENS asked if a person wants to drill a well, does he have to apply for a permit or just use the water. MR. FRITZ said he would have to have a permit and would be classified as a junior user.

REP. CUTRISS closed the hearing on HB 670.

Amendments (EXHIBIT V)

HB 667.

CHAIRMAN ROTH opened the hearing on HB 667, a bill to clarify water rights of the adjudication progarm passed in 1979. She presented possible amendments to the committee and said they had been approved by JUDGE W.W. LESSLEY.

PROPONENTS:

GARY FRITZ, DNRC, said the bill would make five changes. He presented written testimony (EXHIBIT VI).

HENRY LOBLE submitted for the committee's information a copy of a bill entitled "AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE DEPT-MENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION FROM THE WATER RIGHT ADJUDICATION ACCOUNT OF THE EARMARKED REVENUE FUND FOR THE OPERATION OF THE RESERVED WATER RIGHTS COMPACT COMMISSION." (EXHIBIT VII). He said there are negotiations with the indian tribes to resolve the questionable water rights. He said the bill is to form an inducement for the indian tribes to negotiate for water rights. They have been exempted from reserving at present. He felt it would be better to establish a deadline of July 1, 1985 to complete these negotiations. He said that, in several states, the problem is being worked on by litigations costing up to \$6 million. He said that Wyoming is currently spending \$100,000 per month in attorneys' fees. He said that the Ute Indians have concurred a compact with the state of Utah, but that it has not yet been ratified.

GORDON McGOWN said this bill will put Montana on the way to starting a water plan (EXHIBIT VIII).

JOHN SCULLY said he favors the bill and felt the amendments are necessary with regard to the Compact Commission. (EXHIBIT IX).

PAT OSBORN, Northern Plains Resource Council, said that good records are needed and that this bill will help to accomplish that. (EXHIBIT X).

OPPONENTS:

ROD SYGUSA, representing the Inter-Tribal Policy Board, said that tribes have traditionally balked at water rights or water obtained through treaties. Some absolutely refuse, he said. He said a "soft" opposition was voiced by him and told the committee that tribes work slowly and reluctantly. (EXHIBIT XI).

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE:

REP. KEMMIS asked about the provision of appointing more than one water master. On page 2 is stated "at least one", he said. Also, he asked if the appointing should be more flexible and not by July 1982, in the case of more than one water master. MR. FRITZ said that the intention is that only one water master be appointed per district in this biennium, but more may be appointed later.

REP. KEMMIS said that on page 10, lines 15 to 17 the tribes are limited to 60 days to file a claim. DAVE LADD, attorney for the Compact Commission, said this is to prevent a tribe from going into a delaying tactic.

REP. ROTH closed the hearing on HB 667.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

BOB PERSON, distributed amendments to the committee for study. CHAIRMAN ROTH read the amendments proposed by the Sweet Grass Conservation District and also told of the amendments proposed by the DNRC. (EXHIBIT XII). MR. FRITZ commented that he didn't concur with the amended amendments submitted by the CDS, as he felt they returned the bill to its original form.

REP. CONROY moved that the committee accept the DNRC's amendments to HB 529. The motion was seconded and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REP. THOFT asked what was the purpose of DNRC's amendments. MR. BERRY said the DNRC felt the water storage requirement should be made more flexible on a case-by-case basis.

RON WATERMAN, Helena attorney, stated that he appeared as a representative of a specific person, but offered his services to help find a middle ground for those of differing opinions (the Conservation Districts and the DNRC). The Conservation Districts feel that the reservations must be reduced or there should be off-stream storage so they will have more water, said Waterman. More water is reserved than actually flows, he added.

REP. ASAY moved that HB 529 DO PASS AS AMENDED. The motion was seconded and PASSED by a vote of seven to three, with the three NO votes being cast by REPRESENTATIVES HUENNEKENS, NEUMAN and KEMMIS.

HB 551.

REP. KEMMIS moved for a DO PASS AS AMENDED. The motion FAILED by a vote of 5 YES, 3 NO and 2 abstaining.

REP. CONROY MOVED that HB 551 DO NOT PASS AS AMENDED. The motion was seconded and passed by a vote of 8 YES votes and 2 NO votes, the NO votes being cast by REPRESENTATIVES KEMMIS and HUENNEKENS.

HB 670.

REP. CURTISS presented the amendments to the committee. REP. CURTISS moved the AMENDMENTS BE ACCEPTED by the committee. The motion PASSED by a vote of 9 to 1, with REP. HUENNEKENS voting NO.

REP. KEMMIS MOVED that BOB PERSON be allowed to correct minor problems in the amendments. The motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REP. CURTISS MOVED HB 670 DO PASS AS AMENDED. The MOTION FAILED by a vote of 5 to 5, with REPRESENTATIVES THOFT, ASAY, KEMMIS, NEUMAN and HUENNEKENS voting NO.

REP. KEMMIS moved to INDEFINITELY POSTPONE the bill.

REP. CURTISS made a SUBSTITUTE MOTION that HB 670 be TABLED. The motion was seconded and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

HB 667.

REP. CONROY MOVED that HB 667 DO PASS. The motion was seconded and PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

AUDREY ROTH, Chairman

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HOUSE BILL 670

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

AN ACT TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF POTENTIAL OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN MONTANA BY RESERVING LIMITED AMOUNTS OF GROUND WATER NECESSARY FOR THEIR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has been and will remain committed to the continued development of irrigation in Montana. The Department assisted conservation districts in applying for water reservations in the Yellowstone River Basin and is now attacking the problem of funding so that those reservations can be developed. The Department owns water projects that are used primarily for irrigation. Through the years the Department has participated in water planning efforts that have identified and recommended irrigation projects. The Department has supported federal irrigation project planning and construction efforts.

The Department believes that the agricultural sector must continue to grow in Montana but its doubtful that House Bill 670 would promote that development.

The Department opposes HB 670 for the following reasons:

1. House Bill 670 may retard the use of groundwater for agriculture because it violates the first-in-time, first-in-right principle which ensures that those who develop first have a more reliable and therefore valuable right than those who develop later. This bill gives all agricultural users of groundwater the same priority date. In the event that an aquifer cannot supply all desired agricultural uses those who have developed first must share shortages with those who develop later.

- If, however, the water was distributed by "first-in-time, first-in right" the earliest development would have a senior right over subsequent uses. This concept encourages early development of groundwater by ensuring that earlier users are provided a more reliable and valuable right.
- 2. Although preference systems for allocating water were considered and rejected by the legislature's subcommittee on Water Rights (1977-78) and the governor's Water Policy Review Advisory Council this bill proposes a preference system for agriculture. Preference systems prioritize water rights by the type of use rather than by priority date. This concept was rejected because the most highly valued use may not be the same in all regions and a statewide preference system cannot flexibly recognize regional values and changes in values. If a regional aquifer would be inadequate to supply water to all the economically feasible acreage no new permits could be issued for municipal, domestic or industrial uses. This bill could preclude the use of groundwater for new agriculture-related industries such as sugar beet processing, gasohol and meat packing.
- 3. The Department estimates that it would cost at least \$500,000 to inventory each of the irrigable acres of land in Montana and assess economic feasibility. The depth to groundwater would significantly affect feasibility of irrigating these lands and in many cases little is known about the local aquifers.
- 4. This bill imposes an excessive burden on current surface and groundwater right holders by requiring objectors (senior users) to a proposed use of reserved water to establish that the proposed use would adversely affect their right. Studies to evaluate the impacts of each proposed well can take several months and are likely to cost more than \$5,000. In order to protect existing water rights the burden

of proof is usually placed on the applicant rather than the objector to a proposed new use.

The Department is committed to the continued development of agriculture but believes that the existing water permit and reservation system provides adequately for that expansion.

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AMENDMENTS TO HB 670

l. Page 1, line 12.
Following: "3"
Insert: "1/2"

2. Page 1, line 14.
Following: "that"
Insert: "have agricultural potential."

3. Page 1, line 15.
Strike: "susceptible to the pursuit of
 agriculture and economically feasible
 to irrigate"

4. Page 1, line 16.
Following: "is"
Strike: "granted to"
Insert: "vested in"

5. Page 2, line **3**.

Following: "establishes"

Strike: "any of the following"

Insert: "clear and convincing evidence that"

6. Page 2.
Strike: line 9 through 11

7. Page 2, line 17.
Following: "shall"
Strike: "timely"
Insert: "proceed to"

HOUSE BILL 667

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING AND CLARIFYING THE ADJUDICATION OF WATER RIGHTS

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation supports House Bill 667. The bill makes five changes.

- 1. The amendment provides for the supreme court instead of the DNRC to administer the budget of the water judges. The supreme court would supervise the water judges in the same manner it supervises the district judges.
- The amended language clarifies the ability of the water court to appoint more than one water master per water division. Having more than one water master in each division will expedite the preparation of preliminary and final decrees. The water courts intend to utilize no more than one water master per division for the 1982-83 biennium.
- Currently a fee of \$40 is required by court order to accompany a voluntary claim made for exempted uses. The exempted uses are existing water rights for stock and domestic groundwater or instream use. proposed amendment will ease the financial impact on the well owner having domestic and stock uses from a single well, since the cost of adjudication for that water right will generally be less than for other water rights. Under current law and court order the fee would be \$80.00, \$40 for each use claimed. With the proposed amendment the fee would be \$40 if both claims are filed simultaneously.
- Currently a 90 day period with a 30 day extension is provided for objections to be filed to a preliminary decree. This bill proposes to extend the intial 30 day period to 90 days since some preliminary decrees may be the size of a Sears and Roebuck catalog. This will give other water users more time to review the findings of the water court.

5. The resolution of federal and Indian reserved water rights is crucial to the successful adjudication of water rights in the state. The Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission, established by the 1979 Legislature, is working to resolve those reserved rights through negotiations with the Indian tribes and federal agencies. House Bill 667 is needed to integrate the state adjudication process and the reserved water rights negotiations to achieve a comprehensive resolution of water rights.

With these amendments the compact negotiating process would have a deadline. The tribes and federal agencies would have until July 1, 1985, to negotiate a compact with the Compact Commission. Compacts completed by that date would be included in the preliminary decree. If, however, the compacts were not negotiated and approved by July 1, 1985, then the negotiation process would be terminated. Any reserved rights left unresolved at that time would be adjudicated through the water courts.

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AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION FROM THE WATER RIGHT ADJUDICATION ACCOUNT OF THE EARSTHELD REVENUE FUND FOR THE OPERATION OF THE RESERVED WATER RIGHTS COMPACT COMMISSION.

to negotiate with the Indian tribes and federal agencies in the state of Montana to conclude compacts for the equitable division and apportionment of waters between the state and its people and the Indian tribes and federal agencies claiming reserved water rights within the state (MCA 85-2-701, 703) and,

WHEREAS, negotiation of the federal and Indian reserved water rights is an important and integral part of the state-wide adjudication process begun by Senate Bill 76 (Ch. 697 Laws of Montana 1979) and,

WHEREAS, the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission is currently negotiating with the tribes of the Northern Cheyenne, Flathead and Fort Peck Reservations and with the federal departments of Agriculture and Interior, and,

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 76 directs that the costs of the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission be paid from the water right adjudication account (MCA 2-15-212(4)).

Section 1. <u>Appropriation</u>. There is appropriated to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation \$485,000 from the water rights adjudication account of the earmarked revenue fund for the operation of the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission for the biennium ending June 30, 1983.

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STERAGE BE CONSTRUCTED TO 9 SATISFY INSTREAM 10 20 21 22 23 24 RIGHTS, OFFITREAM WATER IS OR WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SATISFY THE TO ALCOW THE BOOKE OF MATHER PROPERTY AND CONSERVATION TO REQUIRE THAT RESERVATION; AMENDING SECTION 85-2-316, MCA; AND PROVIDING OFFICEAM A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT TO REQUIRE APPLICANTS FOR AND HOLDERS OF RESERVATIONS OF WATER TO MAINTAIN MINIMUM FLOW OR QUALITY TO PROVE THAT SUFFICIENT UNAPPROPRIATED certain or quality of water, whereby the applicant has established reservation, and the amount of water necessary for the the reservation or providing a means whereby there would be reservations of water have been made, under the provisions of section 85-2-316, MCA, to maintain a minimum flow, level, the purpose of the reservation, the need for the purpose of the reservation but without establishing that there is either sufficient unappropriated water to satisfy in order to provide for the orderly administration of the waters of this state and to facilitate and pruserve the purpose of allowing reservation of waters sufficient unappropriated water to satisfy the reservation; that BILL NO. 529 Legislature finds AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE." the WHEREAS, WHEREAS. **(** <u>_</u> 12 13

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satisfy such reservation or to provide a means whereby there establish that there is sufficient unappropriated water to will be sufficient unappropriated water to satisfy such detriment of future consumptive uses of water in the state, holder of a reservation of water to maintain a minimum flows receiving or continuing to hold such reservation, to either the Legislature finds it necessary that the applicant or level, or quality be required, as a condition of reservation.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

or any agency thereof may apply to the board to reserve waters for existing or future beneficial uses or to maintain a minimum flow, level, or quality of water throughout the Section 1. Section 85-2-316, MCA, is amended to read: political subdivision or agency thereof or the United States at such periods or for such length of time as the "85-2-316. Reservation of waters. (1) The state or any board designates. year or

conducting investigations, and making records incurred in INTRODUCED BI decide whether to reserve the water for the applicant. The department's costs of giving notice, holding the hearing, (2) Upon receiving an application, the department shall proceed in accordance with 85-2-307 through 85-2-309. After the hearing provided in 85-2-309, the board shall

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maintain a minimum flow or quality of waters to the

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- (a) water shortages that currently exist in a stream;
- frequency of low-flow occurrences in a stream; ۵
- the cost of the offstream storage; ĵ
- (c) the need to augment stream flows to maintain water quality and aquatic ecosystems;
- acting upon the application to reserve water, except the salaries of the department's personnel, shall be paid by the applicant. of cost
- (3) The board may not adopt an order reserving water the applicant establishes to the satisfaction of the unless board:
- the purpose of the reservation; (a)
- the need for the reservation; (a)
- purpose the amount of water necessary for the reservation; (°) the

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- malotato ___minimum_flows_levels_or_quality_of_mater._there to_satisfy_the_reservation_during_tha_period__or__length__of (d) that the reservation is in the public interest* (el_thats.locthecose.of_resecration<of_waters_to is_or_will_be_made_axailable_sufficient_unappropriated_water time_during_which_the_reservation_is_sought_or_designated_by the_board
- satisfy_such_reservation_or_make__orovision__tor__the (4) In the case of all reservations, regardless of when granted, of water to maintain a minimum flow, level, or quality_of_water._the_board_shall_require._as_a_condition_of grapting_such_reservation_or_the_continuance__thereofs__that the __entity__bolding__swch__reservation__either_prove_to_the board_that_there_is_sufficient_unappropriated_water_to_fullx dexelopment_and_maintenanca_of_off=stream_storage_facilities

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the storage facility;

(e) whether funds are available or will become available to construct

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- (f) the economic land base displaced or inundated by the offstream
- storage; and
- (g) any other factors the board considers pertinent.

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- for the purpose of low flow infusion sufficient to maintain the minimum flows levels or quality of water to the axtent
- oranted_in_the_reservations_after_prior_existing_water
 - rights have been satisfied. Fer excesser of this subsections

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 - practicable, such storage sites and the waters stored
 - tbergin__shall_be_utillzed_as__multiple=use__facilitiess including_but_not_limited_to_fisb_and_wildlife._stockwdter.
- recreation. irrigation. and industrial uses. and municipal
- Water_supply_augmentation. If the purpose of the reser.ation
 - the applicant or bolder shall establish to the satisfaction diversion facility, requires construction of a storage or 13
- the facility and accomplishment of the purpose with of the board that there will be progress toward completion 15 14
- (5) The board<u>, in addition to the provisions of</u> reasonable diligence in accordance with an established plan.

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- Subsoction_(4). shall limit any reservations after May 9,
- 1979, for maintenance of minimum flow, level, or quality of water that it awards at any point on a stream or river to a
- maximum of 50% of the average annual flow of record on yauged streams. Ungauged streams can be allocated at the
 - discretion of the board<u>e subject to the proxisions of</u> subsection (4).

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(6) After the adoption of an order reserving waters,

the department may reject an application and refuse a permit for the appropriation of reserved waters or may, with the approval of the board, issue the permit subject to such turms and conditions it considers necessary for the protection of the objectives of the reservation.

conservation district for agricultural purposes shall make application for such use with the district, and the district upon approval of the application must inform the department of the approved use. The department shall maintain records of all uses of water reserved to conservation districts and be responsible for rendering technical and administrative assistance within the department's staffing and budgeting limitations in the processing of such applications for the conservation districts.

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(3) A reservation under this section shall date from the date the order reserving the water is adopted by the board and shall not adversely affect any rights in existence at that time.

every 10 years, review existing reservations to ensure that the objectives of the reservation and the conditions of the reservation and the conditions of the reservation of the being met, the board may extend, revoke, or modify the

reservation.

shown by the applicant to outweigh the need shown by the When wegeround by the board, water reserved for munmum flow may be diverted and star original reservant. Areallocation of reserved water shall not for the 3adversely affect the priority date of the reservation, and flum w ð maintaining minimum flow, level, or quality of water, so as following notice and hearing wherein the board finds that i ts portion thereof to an board purpose and that the need for the reallocation has been (10) The board may modify an existing or future order reallocation to a different entity for a different use. The applicant who is a qualified reservant under this section. the reservation shall retain its priority date despite purpose all or part of the reservation is not required for made by the the originally adopted to reserve water for þe Reallocation of reserved water may to reallocate such reservation or

the reservation shall retain its priority date despite reallocation to a different entity for a different use. The board may not reallocate water reserved under this section on any stream or river more frequently than once every 5

years.

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(11) Nothing in this section vests the board with the authority to alter a water right that is not a reservation."

Section 2. Effective date. This act is effective on passage and approval.

-End-

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