

TESTIMONY OF

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Wind River Irrigation Project Water User and Member of the Crowheart Bench Water Users Association,
Crowheart, Wyoming

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To Whom It May Concern:

The Crowheart Bench Water Users Association (CBWUA) was founded in 2004 by landowners in the Crowheart area. The Crowheart Bench irrigation system services approximately 8800 acres and is composed of Dinwoody Reservoir and many miles of main canals and laterals that are supplied by snowpack and glacial runoff from the Wind River Mountains and multiple perennial streams. The Crowheart Bench irrigation system and the A Canal irrigations system, (another 1800 acres system) utilizing water from the Wind River, together make approximately 27% of the total acreage managed by the irrigation office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Wind River Agency. The decision to form the CBWUA was driven by the discontent of water users with the increasing water operations and maintenance (O&M) assessments and the observed success of the A Canal Irrigators Association. Objectives of the CBWUA upon its inception included:

- 1: To be able to deliver water through the system as efficiently and as cost effective as possible.
- 2: Maintaining the nearly 100 year old system.
- 3: Ensuring the O&M monies collected from Crowheart were used to achieve the above listed objectives in Crowheart.
- 4: Actively participating in the management of the system.
- 5: Reduce the ever widening gap between O&M assessments and declining service.

The CBWUA is recognized through a memorandum of Agreement with the BIA. This was as the result of efforts by:

- 1: Crowheart Water Users
2. Indian Affairs Committee (U.S. Senator Craig Thomas)
3. Tribal Water Engineer (TWE)
4. Joint Business Council (JBC)
5. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

This allows the CBWUA to manage the system through a volunteer seven member board of directors elected by the water user's service by the Crowheart Bench Irrigation system. The CBWUA Board of Directors has actively been pursuing the above objectives and has enjoyed success in nearly every case. Current (O&M assessment for Crowheart Water users is \$14.00/acre, as opposed to \$20.00/acre. This reduced rate is the result of more efficient delivery of water by a local ditch rider hired on a contract basis. The ditch rider provides his own vehicle and covers his expenses and works with the CBWUA Board of Directors to solve problems that occur on the system. The Ditch rider works 6 days per week and is on call during high water. Over the last 4 years the actual cost of water delivery to the Crowheart water users has been approximately \$3.00/acre. Approximately \$4.00/acre is used for maintenance and rehabilitation. The remaining \$7.00/acre has been used for the three administrative positions whose duties include billing collections and project management. Significant steps have been taken to rehabilitate the system including cleaning of many miles of main canal and laterals, replacement of head gates and structures, and repairs to main supply headgates. Much of the work performed on the Crowheart system has been awarded to local contractors via a competitive bid process, which has enabled a great deal of work to be done for a fraction of the cost the BIA incurs to accomplish the same

work. Water users have also volunteered a great deal of time and labor in priming laterals, pouring cement, and assisting with various repairs to the system.

This is not a fix all for the entire project. It has and continues to work well for a variety of reasons.

1. Water supplies
2. Canal conditions
3. Smaller working group
4. Ag Primary Income Source

The next immediate obstacles we wish to overcome are the administrative costs. Because of trust Responsibilities by the BIA to Tribal and allotted lands, we are aware that our input and control will be limited.

1. As late as 1990 Federal monies were appropriated for construction of cement structures and researching ownership of heir ship/fractionated lands for O&M assessment on the Wind River Irrigation Project.
2. We as landowners owning 100% of our properties (fee or trust) feel we are forced to take on the trust responsibility of the BIA by paying 100% of these administrative costs.

We Thank you and look forward to working with Senator Barrasso and the Indian Affairs Committee and finding solutions to these and other irrigation problems.

Respectfully, Crowheart Bench Water Users

William A. O'Neal (Vice President)