

**Testimony of**  
**Rodney Bordeaux, Rosebud Sioux Tribe President**  
**Before**  
**The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Water and**  
**Power**  
**On**  
**Rural Water Supply Act of 2006 Implementation and Status of Authorized Projects**  
**May 27, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the status of the Sicangu Mni Wiconi or Rosebud Sioux Rural Water System and the Rural Water Supply Act of 2006.

My name is Rodney Bordeaux. I am the President of Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. The Rosebud Reservation comprises over one million acres of land with a population of over 20,000.

Having a safe reliable supply of high quality water is taken for granted by most Americans. On the Rosebud Indian Reservation water is respected as a necessity for life and the health and welfare for our people. In the 1980s we developed a small rural water system that took water from a wellfield near the community of Rosebud, where high quality groundwater is available, to the community of Parmelee where it is not. Our tribal leaders tried to work with a variety of agencies including Farmers Home Administration, now generally referred to as Rural Development, and the Indian Health Service to expand the system to other areas of the reservation where good ground water is not available. We struggled without success.

In 1988, the Mni Wiconi Project was authorized and Rosebud was not a part of the project. Representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation met with tribal representatives and explained the project. They emphasized that participation in the project would not impact our reserved water rights and that the Secretary was responsible for paying for the

planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the system. In the early 1990s our leaders decided it was in our best interests to participate in the project because: 1) water lines planned for West River crossed our lands; 2) it did not affect our reserved rights; 3) it helped the United States meet treaty obligations to our Tribe; and 4) no other source of funding was available to meet our pressing water needs.

I would like to stress the last point. There were pressing needs for quality water to improve the health and welfare of our reservation and no “program” available to meet those needs. It was in the best interest of the Tribe to become a part of Mni Wiconi Project. We completed a Needs Assessment in 1993 that identified a preferred alternative for that would use a combination of 62% surface water from Missouri River and 38% groundwater from the Ogallala Aquifer. Rosebud worked with the Oglala Sioux Tribe, West River/Lyman – Jones and the Bureau of Reclamation on the Final Engineering Report for the project.

PL 103-434 was passed in October of 1994 that amended the Mni Wiconi Project Act to meet the full needs of Oglala Sioux Tribe and West River/Lyman Jones and add Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

The inclusion of Rosebud Sioux Tribe would not be possible without diligence and perseverance of the Bureau of Reclamation, our congressional delegation and the other sponsors and we gratefully acknowledge that and show our appreciation. The Mni Wiconi Rural Water Project comprises service areas for both Indians and non-Indians and I believe has improved relations them over the past 15 years. The Bureau of Reclamation has provided an even handedness in their oversight of the project that is unique and their technical competence is praiseworthy.

Mni Wiconi has been a blessing. The project is fulfilling the vital need for quality water on our reservation. By the end of this year we will be close to 75% complete and I can say that the project has been a success. We have brought high quality water to distant corners of Todd and Mellette counties and worked with Tripp County Rural Water to

serve members in Tripp and Gregory Counties in our Secondary Service Area. We have brought a map showing the status of our project and the Primary and Secondary Service Areas. However, we must not forget the remaining work to be completed. The 25% remaining is critical and includes hooking up individual homes and businesses, additional reservoirs and pump stations and upgrading obsolete water lines in some communities such as Rosebud.

The project has met critical economic development and health needs on the reservation. According to the 2000 census, the Rosebud Reservation in Todd County is one of the poorest counties in the country. Forty-six percent of the population is below the poverty level as compared to only 14.0 percent in South Dakota. Mni Wiconi water has been used for two economic development projects and this year we will be extending a water line to serve a tribal commercial center. These projects provide employment opportunities where none existed before. We have also developed direct employment opportunities in the form of construction administration and inspection, water conservation, and tribal construction crews.

Prior to Mni Wiconi Rosebud Rural Water System, members of many communities in the northern portion of our Primary Service Area had to haul water and water borne diseases were rampant. Cases of Gastroenteritis averaged 375 per year between 1981 and 1986 on Rosebud Reservation. The occurrence rate for Shigellosis, another water borne disease, has been reduced from 22 cases in 1992 to 1 case in 2000.

The high quality water supplied by Mni Wiconi meets all the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act and as shown above has a direct impact on the health and welfare of our population. Safe drinking water is a source for good health resulting in lowering of health care costs for our tribal members by Indian Health Service.

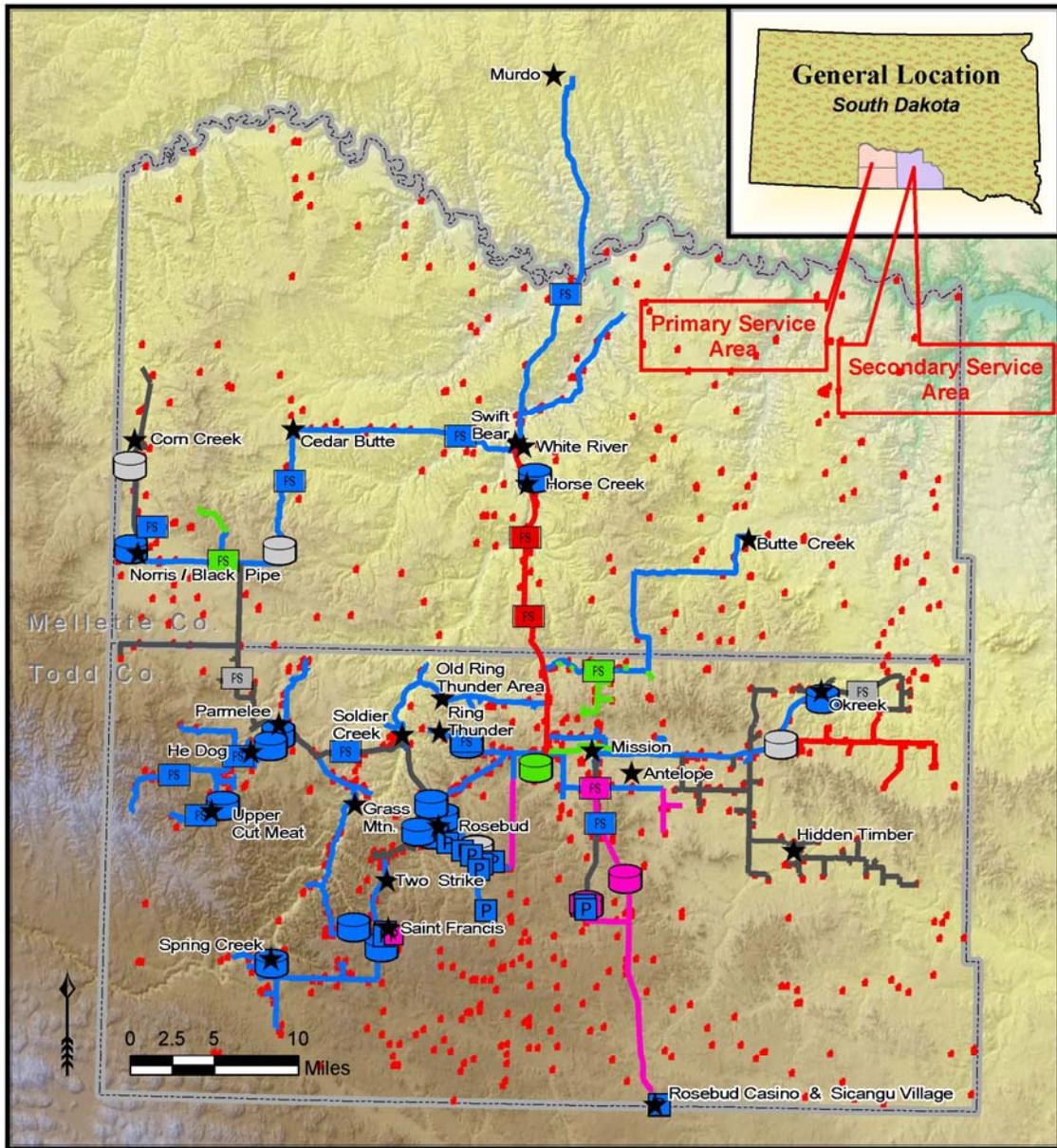
We have developed an excellent working relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation since our early involvement in the project. They have supported our efforts to improve the quality of life on the reservation and shown a high level of common sense and

flexibility in how the Project has been implemented. We have also developed an excellent working relationship with West River/Lyman – Jones in Mellette County.

We have some concerns about Reclamation's Rural Water Program authorized by Rural Water Supply Act of 2006. In meetings with the Commissioner and his staff, they have stressed that they are committed to the timely completion of our project. Our concern is that in subsequent administrations water projects authorized through Reclamations Rural Water Program could be favored as the administration prepares their annual budget request for submission to Congress. We hope this does not occur. The completion date of our project was extended to 2008 and now to 2013; any further extension will prolong the wait for those remaining to benefit from the high quality water provided by the Sicangu Mni Wiconi.

The tribal members on Rosebud Reservation perceive Mni Wiconi as fulfilling an important trust responsibility of the federal government to the Indian Tribes. The history of broken treaties that have deprived them of land and resources has left the tribes angry, poor and distrustful toward the federal government. Mni Wiconi not only is an economic and public health benefits engine to the tribes, it also is building social and cultural infrastructure. The most important high lights of the Mni Wiconi Project is the trust that is being fostered towards the federal government by the Indian tribes and a precedent for Indians being primarily responsible for construction, operation and maintenance of one of the largest rural water system in the country. It is also reconciliation at its finest for the Indians and the non-Indians working together respectfully and cooperatively under the umbrella of the U.S. Government- Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Congress.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts and more importantly, your support for this life sustaining project. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Existing and Planned Water System Features**

Wells		Pumps		Tanks		Pipelines	
[P]	Post 2009	[FS]	Post 2009	[Cylinder]	Post 2009	[Black line]	Post 2009
[P]	2009	[FS]	2009	[Pink cylinder]	2009	[Pink line]	2009
[P]	Existing	[FS]	2008	[Green cylinder]	2008	[Green line]	2008
[P]	Existing	[FS]	2007	[Blue cylinder]	Existing	[Red line]	2007
[P]	Existing	[FS]	Existing	[Blue cylinder]	Existing	[Blue line]	Existing
Non-System Features							
		[Red dot]					
		Rural Homes					

*Sicangu Mni Wiconi*



*Water is Life*