

# United States Senate

April 20, 2021

The Honorable Joe Manchin  
Chairman  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso:

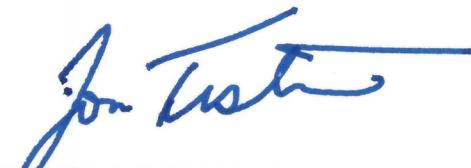
We write to you to request a hearing for our legislation, the *St. Mary's Reinvestment Act (S. 737)*. The St. Mary's Diversion Dam is over a century old, and is in desperate need of rehabilitation.

The St. Mary's Diversion Dam is the headworks of the Milk River Project, diverting water from the St. Mary's River near Glacier National Park into the Milk River. From there, the Project irrigates over 148,000 acres, supplies water to four towns and two Tribal Nations, and meets the U.S. obligation to supply water to Canada under an international agreement. This truly is the lifeblood of Montana's Hi-Line, and this legislation is the critical next step to revitalizing this century-old water infrastructure project.

Currently, water users on the Milk River Project cover 74 percent of operations and maintenance costs, but that funding structure is unsustainable for the hundreds of millions of dollars in needed rehabilitation across the project. Our legislation focuses on providing funding for the most pressing need on the system, the St. Mary's Diversion Dam, and requires Bureau of Reclamation to conduct an ability-to-pay study to determine a more appropriate cost share for water users. Last year, a catastrophic failure at the drop structures downstream of the Diversion Dam underscored the pressing need to invest in this infrastructure. Without a significant federal investment, Montana's agricultural economy, tribal communities, and towns are at risk of losing access to their water.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. We stand ready to work with you to rehabilitate the St. Mary's Diversion Dam and the entire Milk River Project.

Sincerely,



---

Jon Tester  
United States Senator



---

Steve Daines  
United States Senator