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**STATEMENT OF RON HIS HORSE IS THUNDER,
CHAIRMAN, STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE
REGARDING THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT (RRVWSP)**

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Standing Rock Reservation - Prairie Knights Casino and Resort
March 9, 2006 - 1:00 PM

Good Afternoon:

My name is Ron His Horse Is Thunder. I am the Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. On behalf of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, I welcome the Bureau of Reclamation to the reservation and thank the Bureau for giving the Tribe this opportunity to comment on a water supply project which we believe will affect Tribal members and non-members who live on the Standing Rock Reservation.

After carefully considering the intent and purposes of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (hereafter "RRVWSP"), the Tribe fully appreciate the need for residents and businesses located in the Red River Valley to have a dependable supply of water of high quality to meet their present and future needs. However, the Tribe cannot is greatly concerned that construction of the RRVWSP will adversely impact the availability of funding to finish the ongoing drinking water, irrigation and intake repair projects on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Before proceeding with a new construction project, the Tribe respectfully demands that the United States and its agencies complete the ongoing water projects on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Further, issues related to the Standing Rock Reservation's water supply should be appropriately addressed in the requisite environmental impact statement for the RRVWSP.

In November 2003, residents of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation lived through a water outage that lasted more than ten (10) days. The lack of water on the reservation affected more than 10,000 people as well as the institutions and businesses that receive their water supply from the Fort Yates municipal, rural and industrial (MRI) intake. Because of this occurrence, the Tribe and reservation residents well understand the harsh impact that the lack of water has on daily life.

All water intakes providing service to the reservation were affected by the movement of sediment in the upper end of Lake Oahe when water levels reached historic lows in 2003. The water level in the Oahe Reservoir has remained low since then. Low water level also

caused the loss of three irrigation intakes located on the reservation that irrigated about 3,000 acres. At recent meetings, the US Army Corps of Engineers predicted that the Lake Oahe would decline to 1,564 feet during 2006. If so, at that level the Tribe's second drinking water intake near Wakpala, South Dakota will cease working.

The Tribe continues to face threats to its water supply, in large part because of the water management policies and, in the Tribe's view, misplaced priorities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Of course, the continuing drought in the Upper Missouri River Basin coupled with the downstream states' unreasonable demands for water stored in the main-stem reservoirs to support downstream navigation at the expense of on-reservation domestic and agricultural use.

The RRVWSP and other new projects within the Upper Missouri River Basin ought not be authorized until structural measures are taken to correct intake deficiencies and operational measures are taken to reduce downstream releases for navigation. While the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe supports the concept of the RRVWSP, the Tribe simply cannot support funding for the RRVWSP until the authorized but unfinished MRI projects – reservation irrigation -- on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation and elsewhere in North Dakota are drawn to closure.

The Bureau of Reclamation has recently sponsored legislation that would establish criteria of for new rural water projects with a funding ceiling under \$100 million. The DEIS does not address funding or how the legislation sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation would impact the RRVWSP. It is the Tribe's understanding that the U.S. Senate passed the legislation in the last session and that the House is planning to hold hearings on the legislation in the current session.

We are concerned that of the availability estimates of the water needed for the RRVWSP are erroneous. The depletion estimates need to fully account for available water sources in the Red River Valley, including both surface and groundwater. Moreover, such estimates must consider reuse of effluent as a part of the RRVWSP future water supply. The alternatives set forth do not seem to provide for water supply combinations that would be less reliant on the Missouri River.

We are also concerned that the said DEIS does not address changes in the operation of the Missouri River, including reduction in navigation releases, and current Master manual guidelines for lowering reservoirs during drought. Those issues need to be addressed to mitigate the impact of diversions and depletions that are presented by the proposed RRVWSP.

Again, the Tribe would support the RRVWSP in the event that the Tribe's concerns are addressed. The Tribe asserts that the current DEIS is deficient in its plan formulation as it fails to: address the need to complete authorized and ongoing water projects on the reservation and throughout the state; to remedy existing intake problems in the Oahe Reservoir and elsewhere in the Missouri Mainstem Reservoir System; and to mitigate the impacts of Red River Valley diversions and depletions by amending the operational

guidelines in Lake Oahe and the other mainstem reservoirs and reducing the planned releases for downstream navigation.

Thank you for listening to the Tribe's concerns regarding the proposed RRVWSP.

