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REPLY:	YES	NO
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CLASSIFICATION		
PROJECT		
CONTROL NO.		
FOLDER I.D.		

March 15, 2006

Regional Director
 United States Bureau of Reclamation
 P.O. Box 36900
 Billings, Montana 59107-6900

Dear Sir:

The purpose of this letter is to request an extension of the time which is being allowed for comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

Reclamation invited participation by various entities and groups in the development of studies and documents which would be necessary in order for the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a comprehensive study of the water quality and quantity needs of the Red River Valley and possible options for meeting those needs through an open and public process in accordance with the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA). Thus, a large number of groups and agencies participated in a lengthy process which preceded the preparation of the DNOR by Reclamation and the State of North Dakota. The report was released by the Dakotas Area Manager with a comment deadline of October 3, 2005. My comments were mailed on September 28, 2005 and numerous other comment letters were provided in a timely manner.

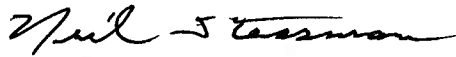
Contrary to my expectations and to what I understand to be representative of "an open and public process" such as the Secretary was mandated by the DWRA to conduct, the "Final Report on Red River Valley Water Needs and Options" (FNOR) was distributed November 28, 2005, and a "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" (DEIS) was distributed December 30, 2005 without responses having been provided to those who commented on the DNOR. The Area Manager's November 28, 2005 letter transmitting the FNOR stated that Reclamation would make the comments and responses available to the public early in 2006. Although I disagreed with the sequence that Reclamation chose for this process and I stated that disagreement in a meeting with Regional Director Michael Ryan on December 14, 2005, I believe the Area Manager's commitment was at least a clear indication that there was a realization on the part of Reclamation that making the comments and responses available to the public was recognized as a necessary part of the public participation process for the Environmental Impact Statement.

The comments were provided to Reclamation more than 5-months ago. The DNOR which prompted the comments was finalized and published by Reclamation more than three and one half months ago. I have not received responses to the comments and do not find that they are available on the web site as promised. It is unrealistic to expect the interested public, including myself, to comment on the DEIS or to effectively participate in the process at this point without the benefit of those responses.

I believe the present deadline for comments on the DEIS is March 30, 2006. The comment period should not be terminated until the DNOR comments and responses have been made available to the public and until the public has had adequate time to consider them in relation to

the DEIS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neil Stessman".

Neil Stessman
1106 Moon Valley Rd
Billings, MT 59105

CC:

✓ Dennis Breitzman, Area Manager
Signe Snortland, Study Manager