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River Basin Natural Resource District Oversight Advisory Task Force:

Task Force Members, I thank you for your time today, I am sorry I am unable to attend today, representing myself Mike Elsen, I wanted to comment on the importance of this day and at the monumental task ahead, but with innovative thinking, could set an example for this region if not this country.

For those of you that don't know me, my family farms and lives in northern Brown County where we have experienced a great deal of water problems in the past. From 1995-2010 Brown County, South Dakota ranked 12th in the nation for agricultural disaster payments, and in 2010 alone, Brown County, South Dakota ranked number 1 in the nation based on EWG's data at that time. In 2010, 32% of Brown County's cropland was left to preventive planting due to the flooding caused by excessive rainfall. Back then there were disaster programs that got producers through those trying times, the next time we, as well as many other farmers in our region, experience such disaster, we may not be so lucky. So this issue is very important to me as well as many farmers in this northeast region of the state, to find solutions to these flooding problems and to better utilize a resource that many states to the south and west of us would love to have is definitely important going ahead.

I think this could be a great opportunity, with innovative thinking, to solve a lot of water issues as well as many other issues. I would like everyone here today to think in a new term, and that term is "Natural Resource Development and Utilization". This concept of thinking would include utilizing the excess water to be developed into irrigation resources through drainage management systems. Through these types of management systems we can not only mitigate flooding but mitigate drought as well and be better able to properly apply and recycle nutrients. In order to minimize nutrient runoff we need to be able get on the land in a manageable fashion, and that can only be achieved with proper improved drainage. Utilizing Wetland Mitigation Banking to restore wetlands and develop better water quality and wildlife habitat, so our cropland can be utilized in the most productive and sustainable manner that promotes soil health and promotes sustainability of agriculture in this great state. These are just some of the tools that could be available in the "tool box". This also would be a great opportunity for job creation through development.

I understand you are only at the "starting gate" of setting up the districts, I believe you have a good group of people on the task force today and If we all work together with a vision to find solutions to these problems, everyone has the potential to be winners, not to be a system of just winners and losers. If agriculture, wildlife, and conservation work along with landowners, the "ultimate stakeholders", together in unity with this task force, anything is achievable, but divided, we will only conquer ourselves.

I thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,



Michael Elsen
8/13/2015