

2-18-2010

Montana Rural Water Systems 31st Annual Conference

Max S. Baucus

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Recommended Citation

Baucus, Max S., "Montana Rural Water Systems 31st Annual Conference" (February 18, 2010). *Max S. Baucus Speeches*. 873.
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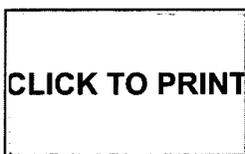
(select subject from controlled vocabulary, if your office has one)

(2) Subject* **Montana Rural Water Systems' 31st Annual Conference**

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* "required information"



SENATOR MAX BAUCUS
REMARKS
Montana Rural Water Systems' 31st Annual Conference
2-18-2010

Thank you everyone for the chance to talk with you for a few minutes. I'd especially like to thank Dan Keil (KYLE), Dave Jones, and all the board members and staff at Montana Rural Water Systems. Thank you for all you do to make sure every Montana family has access to clean drinking water. Let's give them a round of applause.

According to legend, Mark Twain once said "whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting." Here in the west our history has been largely shaped by water.

From the legendary wars of the wild west, to the modernization of irrigation, water has been a staple in our state for hundreds of years.

And while different folks may have different takes on what water means, none would dispute how crucial water is.

If you talk with an angler on the Big Horn their view would be different than a farmer in Glendive. But no matter what your view, water is at the heart of our state.

It's about our economy and our recreation.

**It's about protecting our landscape and
sustaining our heritage.**

**My friend and mentor Mike Mansfield once
was giving a description of all the aspects of
Montana, and when he was describing the
snowcapped peaks he gave this very apt
description: *A theme of hope runs through these
snows because they are the principal storehouse
of the state's great natural resource of water.***

Here at home, more than 95 percent of water consumed is used for agriculture helping generate more than three billion dollars per year.

The next largest consumptive use of water in Montana is municipal – about one percent. The vast majority of Montanans that are served by municipal systems are served by small, rural public water systems like the ones that you work with every day.

It is a joint state – Federal responsibility to ensure that we are each providing the needed resources to develop and maintain these systems.

Over the years, I have worked diligently to address the water needs of rural Montana, particularly across the Hi-Line region of our state. In the past year, I'm proud to have worked to help secure more than \$190 million for water and wastewater projects in Montana.

We've managed to get projects going at Fort Peck/Dry Prairie, Rocky Boy's/North Central Water Supply Project, and the St. Mary Diversion. To date, Federal appropriations for these projects have totaled more than \$160 million, including \$60 million provided as part of the Recovery Act in 2009.

I've introduced legislation with Senator Tester to authorize the Dry – Redwater project, and it's making its way through the legislative process back in Congress.

We're also working hard to complete our work on tribal water compacts. We're pushing now to get the Crow Water Compact through the final stages of the legislative process and hope to move forward on the Blackfeet Compact soon.

You know it's funny. Talking with some of my colleagues or other east coasters, they can't even comprehend that we have to battle to get clean drinking water. But it is a fight that I relish, because I know how important each and every one of these projects are to our communities and our state.

To conclude, I want to say that no one knows the value of water more than the people in this room.

Your years of service and dedication to Montana's communities should be commended -- it has played a key role in developing Montana's rural economies.

I congratulate you for your work and look forward to our continued work together to protect and preserve Montana's water resources for future generations.