

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write to urge full and fair consideration of the St. Mary Diversion Dam and Canal of the Milk River Project (Project) in northwestern Montana to be an authorized recipient of funding as appropriated in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, titled under "Water Conveyance and Surface Water Storage Enhancement".

When the Canal was originally constructed in 1915, it had the capacity to divert up to 850 cubic feet per second (cfs). However, due to its age, capacity has declined to about 600 cfs. This reduction in capacity is leading to a loss of more than 70,000-acre feet that's flowing across the border into Canada every year. As a headwater state, these water losses are also felt beyond Montana, where water should be flowing across the west and as far south as Fresno, California.

While two out of the five Drops have been successfully replaced, failure of the remaining three is imminent. As you may know, Drop 5 failed in 2020 and the Siphon failed in 2025, leading to the complete loss of the irrigation season for local and regional producers and resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars lost. The failure of any three remaining Drops could once again lead to catastrophic failure and severe economic loss.

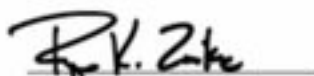
Funding under "Water Conveyance and Surface Water Storage Enhancement" was designated specifically for "construction and associated activities that restore or increase the capacity or use of existing conveyance facilities constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation." The current fragility of the system speaks to the dire need to restore this key infrastructure to protect our precious water resources.

Thank you for considering my request and we look forward to continuing to partner with you to restore the entire St. Mary Canal and Conveyance Works system.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Ryan Zinke  
Member of Congress



Tim Sheehy  
United States Senator



Troy Downing  
Member of Congress