

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Brenda Burman  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Reclamation  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Commissioner Burman:


We write to encourage the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to expedite any regulatory changes that are required to align your policies with the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (PL 115-334). The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 legalizes hemp cultivation, building on a pilot program authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill. Hemp is a versatile commodity that can be used in a wide range of products including paper, fabric, and biodegradable plastic. Its cultivation will allow farmers to diversify crops in rural states like Montana and Colorado.

In 2014, Congress established a pilot program to allow state Departments of Agriculture to license farmers to grow industrial hemp. Throughout the pilot program, we've heard directly from participants that conflicting USDA, Bureau of Reclamation and Department of Justice policies could prohibit their access to federally controlled water. In some cases, hemp farmers were denied access to their water. This frustrating circumstance hindered research, created economic hardships for the affected producers, and led to uncertainty across the West.

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 removes hemp from the federal list of controlled substances, paving the way for it to become a widely planted crop. Therefore, we request that the BOR act quickly to update its policies to ensure hemp producers can access their water. We share an interest in assisting families in rural America and are pleased that this Farm Bill gives folks more freedom to choose their crops.


Please don't hesitate to follow up with us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator