

Baucus, Tester pushing for drought relief, Montana Meth funding

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Water projects in drought-stricken northern Montana may soon see a flood of federal funding, U.S. Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester said Thursday after the Senate Appropriations Committee set aside \$16 million for two major projects.

Other appropriations bills clearing committee Thursday include \$1 million for law enforcement projects in and near Great Falls and \$500,000 to keep the Montana Meth Project's hard-hitting advertising campaign on the airwaves.

The funding bills now go before the full Senate for approval.

On Thursday the committee approved \$10 million for the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation and the Dry Prairie Rural Water System and \$6 million for the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority.

The Dry Prairie project is a rural water system for the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, which also serves Valley, Daniels, Sheridan and Roosevelt counties. Once completed, the system will deliver treated water from the Missouri River through 3,200 miles of pipeline to 31,000 people in northeastern Montana.

The water authority project will deliver clean, safe drinking water to more than 50,000 people who live across northcentral Montana. The project will eventually deliver treated water from Lake Elwell to the Chippewa Cree Tribe and 22 public water systems.

Law enforcement funding approved by the committee includes \$500,000 for the Great Falls Emergency Services Advanced Regional Training Center and \$500,000 for the Chippewa Cree Juvenile Detention Center Renovation Project.

Great Falls Police Chief Corky Grove said he was pleased.

"These dollars will serve as a down payment in helping to make our emergency services and training center even better," he said.

Montana Meth Project Chairman Mike Gullledge hailed the news of the funding, saying it shows a federal commitment to fighting methamphetamines.

"Our meth problem is not going to go away overnight, but we are already seeing solid results due to the Montana Meth Project's innovative campaigns," Gullledge said.

Until recently, the Montana Meth Project was financed solely by private donations.

Tom Siebel launched the Meth Project in Montana in September 2005. All told, he has contributed more than \$15 million to the project, but recently challenged state and federal officials to help fund the program. Siebel also has announced a \$5 million "challenge grant" that will match, dollar for dollar, contributions from private entities.