Statement of Gilbert G. Stamm, Commissioner of Reclamation, Witness for the Department of the Interior before the Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, on H.R. 6622, A Bill "To provide for repair of the Del City aqueduct, a feature of the Norman Federal reclamation project, Oklahoma."—June 5, 1975

Mr. Chairman, we are appearing today to present our views on H.R. 6622, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to adjust the payment obligations of the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District by an amount equal to the cost incurred by the district to repair excessive breaks in the Del City aqueduct.

We recommend enactment of the bill. It is our opinion that the district should be relieved of the costs of repairing those breaks in the aqueduct that are in excess of the costs of normal operations, maintenance, and replacement. An amendatory contract would permit the Secretary of the Interior to credit the extraordinary repair costs to the district's capital repayment installment.

The Del City aqueduct, a 6.2-mile-long, 18- to 24-inch-diameter, precast concrete pipeline, is a feature of the Norman Project, Oklahoma. The project provides a municipal and industrial water supply for the cities of Norman, Del City, and Midwest City, and flood protection to lands south and east of the project area. Principal features are Norman Dam on Little River, two pumping plants, and a pressure pipeline to service each city. Water stored in Norman Reservoir is pumped into two pipelines, one
serving Norman City directly and the other leading to a relift pumping plant and separate pipelines serving Del City and Midwest City. Total project costs are approximately $19 million of which over $11.9 million are reimbursable by the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District. The remaining costs are nonreimbursable and are allocated to recreation, fish and wildlife, flood control, and highway improvement.

Construction of Norman Dam began in 1962 and was completed in 1965. Construction of the pipelines and pumping facilities began in 1963 and was essentially complete in 1965. When the contractor began filling operations on the Del City aqueduct in November 1965, breaks were discovered and repaired in the 18- and 21-inch sections of pipe.

Twenty-four breaks were discovered and repaired before filling was completed in April 1966. Nine additional breaks were repaired later in 1966. The Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District assumed responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the project on May 2, 1966, with the exception of expenses incurred in repairing the numerous breaks in the Del City aqueduct.

The contractor repaired all breaks from November 1966 to December 31, 1972, at no cost to the district or to the United States. During this period, a total of 74 breaks occurred. Pipeline breaks subsequent to 1972 have been repaired by the
United States, in conjunction with continued research efforts aimed at determining the causes of the breaks. Ten breaks were repaired during 1973 and 1974. To date, all breaks or leaks have occurred in the 18- and 21-inch-diameter pipe.

We consider 84 breaks in 6.2 miles of pipeline during a 9-year period excessive in nature, especially when compared to a total of only 3 breaks in the remaining 24 miles of pipeline on the Norman Project. We have concluded that the pipeline breaks have been caused by several factors beyond the district's control, including unusual soil conditions. Our studies indicate that the most economical approach in correcting this problem is the continued repair of breaks as they occur. Future breaks will be documented in detail and reanalyzed in 5 years to determine whether another course of action should be taken.

We cannot predict accurately how far into the future the pipeline failures will continue, or the total number of breaks that may occur during the 50-year repayment period. However, based on historical records, we estimate an average of 6 breaks will occur each year for some time in the future, and that the average annual cost of the repairs will be approximately $3,000.

As stated earlier, we do not believe that the anticipated breaks should be considered a normal operation, maintenance, and replacement responsibility of the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy.
District. We recommend that future breaks of the Del City aqueduct be repaired by the district and that the district's costs be credited toward its annual repayment obligation to the United States, as provided for in H.R. 6622.