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Testimony submitted to the United States Senate
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
May 09, 2013

RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY 2014 Budget for the Bureau of Reclamation

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is requesting a minimum level of $1.5 billion in funding for the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Water and Related Resources program. An increase above the proposed FY 2014 Budget for Reclamation's is needed to meet the diverse water supply needs and increasing aging infrastructure needs in the 17 Western States that Reclamation serves. Funding to address water supply challenges provides benefits beyond increasing water availability and upgrading aging infrastructure; it provides jobs and stimulates the local economy, prevents property damage and life loss, paves an avenue for a secure and safe water and food supply, and improves conditions for fish and wildlife.

OWRC represents irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These local government entities operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production. OWRC has been promoting the protection and use of water rights and the wise stewardship of water resources on behalf of agricultural water suppliers for over 100 years. About one-half of our members are in Reclamation Projects and many of the remaining members have contracts with Reclamation or have been awarded grants under the WaterSMART program.

WaterSMART Initiative

OWRC strongly supports increased funding for the WaterSMART Initiative—Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow—a key suite of programs used by Oregon's irrigation districts to support water conservation activities. The combined results of WaterSMART Grants, Water Conservation Field Services Program, Basin studies, and other conservation programs are making progress toward the Department of Interior's goal of conserving 730,000 acre-feet of water by the end of 2013 and increase agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental water supply availability in the Western U.S. These programs are an important part of the overall funding package for water conservation projects collaboratively developed by local communities, supported with local and state funding, and designed to meet those communities' unique needs while still meeting the goal of water conservation.

Water Conservation Field Services Program

The Water Conservation Field Services Program (WCFSP) is a key component in supporting irrigation districts' and similar water delivery systems' water conservation efforts. In the past the WCFSP has provided a breadth of technical assistance to irrigation districts and provided partial funding for materials used to pipe and line canals, measurement and other technology, and water conservation plans–all supporting water conservation efforts being implemented by these districts. While we are supportive of exploring innovative ways to utilize reclaimed and reused water, we continue to be concerned about funding a few expensive projects in limited areas while there are large unmet needs in other more established WaterSMART programs, like WCFSP.

We request that a portion of the $14 million for Title XVI projects should be reallocated to the WCFSP, which will yield more immediate and cost-effective water conservation measures in all 17 Western States.

The planning projects and technical assistance funded under the WCFSP are key components that help our member districts identify opportunities for water conservation through improved water management and capital investments. A lack of funding for the feasibility phase of projects is an impediment to the districts' ability to move forward with implementing water conservation projects like those listed below. This program provides seed money for both short and long term planning by districts and water users that results in helping Oregon meet the competing demands for water in basins throughout the state. Furthermore, technical assistance under this program can help water suppliers plan for and adapt to potential impacts from climate change.

Additionally, we believe the management of the WCFSP should remain with the Regional Offices in order to retain the close connection between Reclamation and Project managers and ensure that Reclamation's resources are used to best support the management of its Projects. The WCFSP is one of the Reclamation services most appreciated by our members. The regional staff, and particularly the local area office staff, understand the unique operating and delivery challenges of the various Projects, and therefore provide very meaningful support to the managers of those Projects.

WaterSMART Grants

WaterSMART cost-share grants have supported Oregon districts' efforts to improve water delivery systems, conserve water, and implement innovative projects to meet the diverse water needs in our state. These projects have been a key ingredient to the districts' efforts to work cooperatively with other stakeholders in their respective river basins to address the in-stream needs and water quality needs of their basins, without reducing the amount of land to which the districts deliver water, and avoiding enforcement actions by Federal or State agencies. There continues to be more applicants than available funding and increased funding is needed to enable local water suppliers to continue their work to conserve water and help meet the Secretary's water conservation goal. With a return of over $5 for every $1 of Federal investment, and non-federal match generally exceeding the required amount, this program far exceeds the results of other partnerships between the Federal government and local project sponsors.

Examples of Oregon Projects Funded through the WaterSMART Initiative

The following projects are examples of how Reclamation's WaterSMART Initiative is helping Oregon districts. More projects like these could be developed and implemented with additional federal support through the WaterSMART Program.

- ***Central Oregon Irrigation District, Malott Tail Water Recovery Project -*** The Central Oregon Irrigation District will construct a retention system, including installation of an energy efficient pump, to recapture and reuse irrigation, storm, and run-off water to decrease the amount of water deliveries necessary for irrigation. The project is expected to result in water savings of about 398 acre-feet annually, help to improve water quality in the Lower Crooked River, potentially benefitting reintroduced steelhead in that portion of the river. **Reclamation Funding: $18,960 Total Project Cost: $257,178**

- ***North Unit Irrigation District, Water and Energy Conservation Initiative Phase II -*** The North Unit Irrigation District will work with the Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) to pipe one mile to address seepage losses. The project is expected to result in approximately 1,300 acre-feet of water savings annually and through a partnership with the Deschutes River Conservancy, conserved water will be marketed to restore instream flows in the Crooked River. The project will also lead to increased flows through existing turbines, which will enable COID to generate up to an additional 318,638 kilowatt-hours of energy each year and allow approximately 191,178 kilowatt-hours of energy to be saved annually through pumping reductions. **Reclamation Funding: $300,000 ($600,000 over 2 years) Total Project Cost: $1,347,935**

- ***North Unit Irrigation District, Lateral 58-11 Piping Project -*** The North Unit Irrigation District will also pipe two miles of an earthen canal that currently loses a significant amount of water to seepage. The project is expected to result in water savings of approximately 673 acre-feet annually. Conserved water will be used to restore instream flows in the Crooked River. The District estimates that an average 158,155 kilowatt-hours of energy will be saved annually through pumping reductions. **Reclamation Funding: $200,000 ($942,982 over 3 years) Total Project Cost: $1,923,447**

- ***Ochoco Irrigation District, Ochoco Main Canal Multi-purpose Screen and Automation -*** The Ochoco Irrigation District will install a new flume to allow more accurate water measurement, a new gate with automated control, and a multipurpose screen at the District's main canal diversion near the Ochoco Dam outlet. The project is expected to result in water savings of 2,870 acre-feet annually by reducing seepage and spills and approximately 656,640 kilowatt-hours of energy to be saved annually through reduced pumping of water from the Crooked River. **Reclamation Funding: $146,909 Total Project Cost: $299,814**

- ***Owyhee Irrigation District, Lower Owyhee River Rehabilitation Project Phase II -*** The Owyhee Irrigation District will convert 4.5 miles of existing open ditch conveyance to closed pipeline and will also install 20 advanced flow meters and an automated side sweep cleaner to improve the operational efficiency of the delivery system. The project is expected to result in water savings of about 188 acre-feet annually and is expected to facilitate future on-farm improvements by landowners who may take advantage of the pressurized system to convert from furrow irrigation to sprinkler and drip irrigation. **Reclamation Funding: $299,000 Total Project Cost: $1,161,004**

- ***Three Sisters Irrigation District, Watson-McKenzie Main Canal Pipeline Project -*** The Three Sisters Irrigation District will pipe 14,000 feet of the Watson-McKenzie Main Canal and will install meters at farm turnouts. The project is expected to result in water savings of approximately 1,850 acre-feet annually which will be dedicated for instream flows through the Deschutes River Conservancy. Additional water in Whychus Creek is expected to improve riparian habitat and benefit Bullhead Trout and Steelhead. The pressurized pipeline resulting from this project will also allow farmers who receive deliveries from the District to implement further improvements. **Reclamation Funding: $750,000 ($1,500,000 over 3 years) Total Project Cost: $5,604,981**

America's Great Outdoors Initiative & Ecosystem Restoration
OWRC is supportive of the "America's Great Outdoors Initiative," and increased funding to support collaborative ecosystem restoration efforts that meet Reclamation's mission. Funding for the Columbia and Snake River Salmon Recovery Project is essential as Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA Fisheries prepare to meet the requirements of the Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion that provides reasonable and prudent alternatives to mitigate impacts to Columbia-Snake river salmon and steelhead. We strongly encourage Reclamation to consider dedicating funding for fish passage and fish screening projects that can help meet these requirements. This type of funding could be leveraged with state and local efforts to maximize cost effectiveness and environmental benefits. Additionally, funding for the Klamath Project will help support ongoing efforts to improve water supplies to meet the myriad of agricultural and environmental needs that depend upon it. Providing funding for these types of collaborative restoration efforts will lead to implementable, cost-effective water resources solutions that help reduce conflict and expensive litigation.

Aging Infrastructure & Dam Safety
While we are heartened to see increased funding for the Dam Safety Program, the actual amount available is limited since the bulk of funding will be consumed by the ongoing work at Folsom Dam. OWRC requests additional funding to support necessary improvements and investigations for not only dam safety but to address other aging infrastructure problems in the 17 Western States. Many of the 824 dams and reservoirs that Reclamation manages (and associated delivery systems) were built 50 to 100 years ago and are in dire need of improvement. These improvements are costly and deferred maintenance leads to reduced system efficiency, water conservation, and in some instances catastrophic failure. The need to address aging infrastructure is even more crucial when potential climate change impacts are considered.

Bridging the Headgates MOU
The need for continued coordination among federal agencies is a significant issue. The Bridging the Headgates program established by a MOU between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Reclamation has proven successful in coordinating their efforts and we support the reauthorization of this program. We made the same request in our testimony on the FY 2014 budget for NRCS which can be referred to for details of this request.

We respectfully request the appropriation of at least $1.5 billion for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program for FY 2014. Furthermore, we recognize the difficult nature of the ongoing federal budget discussions, but feel it is inappropriate and potentially detrimental to sequester funding for WaterSMART grants when we see how much positive benefits are occurring on the ground, and especially when there are other areas of Interior's budget that are not as proven or helpful in providing economic and environmental benefits. We would be happy to speak with Committee staff further about this issue. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY 2014 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Program.

Sincerely,
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