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Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Testimony submitted to the United States House of Representatives Committee on  
Appropriations, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
March 30, 2012

**RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY 2013 Budget for the Bureau of Reclamation**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) was established in 1912 as a trade association to support member needs to protect water rights and encourage conservation and water management statewide. OWRC represents non-potable agriculture water suppliers in Oregon, primarily irrigation districts, as well as other special districts and local governments that deliver irrigation water. About one-half of our members are in Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Projects; most of the rest of our members have contracts for water with Reclamation or have been awarded grants under the WaterSMART program. OWRC represents the entities that operate water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production.

OWRC continues to support an increase in funding for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program above the Administration's proposed FY 2013 Budget request for Reclamation's programs west-wide. A minimum level of \$1 billion is needed to meet the diverse water supply needs and increasing aging infrastructure needs in the 17 Western States. Reclamation's ability to claim and sustain its roles as the leader in meeting the water needs in the West hinges on its ability to respond to water supply needs, and its budget must reflect these increasing needs rather than a budget that reduces the Bureau's ability to provide that level of leadership.

**WaterSMART Initiative**

OWRC strongly supports increased funding for the WaterSMART Grants and Water Conservation Field Services Programs—the two programs that are used the most by Oregon's irrigation districts to support water conservation activities. These two programs support Interior's Priority Goal seeking to conserve an estimated 490,000 acre-feet of water by the end of 2012 in a manner that local watershed councils in Oregon and local communities support, that leverage the federal dollars far beyond normal amounts, and that add to the conserved water within a fairly short time-frame. These programs are also an important part of the overall funding package for water conservation projects that are collaboratively developed by local communities and are designed to meet those communities' needs while still meeting the Secretary's 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 last several years the WCFSP has provided a breadth of technical assistance to irrigation districts and provided partial funding for pipe for used to pipe canals, canal linings, SCADA systems, GIS systems, and water conservation plans – all supporting water conservation program being implemented by these districts.

OWRC is heartened by in the modest increase in funding for the WCFSP from the 2012 Enacted levels. However, we request that funding be increased to \$8 million to reflect unmet needs for planning and implementing smaller-scale water conservation projects. This increase is comparable to the 2010 Enacted Budget and is less than half of the budget for the Title XVI Projects, which are not broadly applicable in all 17 Western States. 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 the WCFSP and WaterSMART grant programs. Providing increased funding for WCFSP projects 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 often the planning work that helps our member districts identify opportunities for water conservation through improved water management and capital investments. Many have reached a point at which the lack of funding for the non-construction phase of projects is becoming and will continue to be an impediment to the districts' ability to move forward with water conservation projects. The Federal share in these projects ensures that the districts are able to continue these planning efforts without which the projects described in the WaterSMART Grant Program below may not be implemented and the water not conserved. 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.

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 managing the program understands the Projects and the environment in which they are managing their facilities and water and thus have been able to provide support that is meaningful and helpful to the managers of those projects.

### ***WaterSMART Grants***

OWRC continues to be a strong advocate for the former Challenge Grant program that is now part of the WaterSMART Program. WaterSMART cost-share grants have supported Oregon districts' efforts to improve water delivery systems, conserve water, and implement innovative projects to meet the water needs in our state. These projects have been key to some of the districts' ability to work cooperatively with other parties 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 the Federal or State governments.

We request that the WaterSMART Grant program be increased to a minimum of \$27 million, which was 2010 Enacted budget level. There continues to be more applicants than available funding and increasing the funding to last previous levels will enable local water supplies to continue their work to conserve water and make their contribution to 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. We anticipate continued success with this program for our member districts to implement system improvements that benefit their respective water users and their communities but limited funding will hamper their ability to continue their success in these efforts.

### **Examples of Oregon Projects Funded through the WaterSMART Initiative**

The following projects are examples of how Reclamation's WaterSMART Initiative has helped Oregon districts. More projects like these could be developed and implemented with additional federal support through the WaterSMART Grant program and Water Conservation Field Services Program.

#### ◆ **Owyhee Irrigation District Water and Energy Efficiency Project**

Owyhee Irrigation District will convert 2.9 miles of an existing open ditch conveyance system to closed pipe to provide pressurized irrigation water to farms in their service area. The district will also install automated gates, flow meters and a solar powered automated side sweep cleaner to improve the operational efficiency of the delivery system. The project is expected to result in water savings of 194 acre-feet annually that will be left in Lake Owyhee to be made available for downstream water users. Once the pipeline has been installed, the project will also enable landowners to convert 970 acres from furrow irrigation to sprinkler irrigation which may lead to additional water and energy savings. **Reclamation Funding: \$299,946 Total project: \$891,842**

#### ◆ **Three Sisters Irrigation District, Main Canal Pipeline Penstock Hydro Project**

The Three Sisters Irrigation District will replace 20,000 feet of open canal with polyethylene pipe, an improvement expected to result in 750 acre-feet of water savings annually in the watershed Upper Deschutes Basin in Oregon. Water conserved through this project will be marketed through the Deschutes River Conservancy for a protected instream right, to support critical habitat for Bull Trout, Red band Trout, Summer Steelhead and Chinook Salmon. The District will also install a 700-kilowatt capacity turbine generator as part of the project, a renewable source of energy that the District expects to supply 3.1 million kilowatt-hours of electricity. **Reclamation Funding: \$859,149 Total Project Cost: \$3,372,728**

#### ◆ **Tumalo Irrigation District, Phase 3 Piping of the Tumalo Feed Canal**

The Tumalo Irrigation District will convert 6.3 miles of canal to pipeline to complete the final phase of its effort to pipe the Tumalo Feed Canal. This project is expected to save 536 acrefeet of water per year that is currently being lost to seepage. Conserved water will be dedicated to the State of Oregon for permanent instream flows to benefit endangered species such as the Chinook Salmon, Steelhead, and Bull Trout. **Reclamation Funding: \$1,000,000 Total Project Cost: \$2,000,000**

#### ◆ **North Unit Irrigation District, Water & Energy Conservation Initiative**

The North Unit Irrigation District will line approximately 5 miles of the Main Canal to address seepage losses. The project is expected to result in 7,880 acre-feet of water savings annually. Conserved water will be used to restore instream flows in the Crooked River. The District estimates that approximately 1,220 megawatt-hours of electricity will be saved annually through pumping reductions. **Reclamation Funding: \$1,000,000 Total Project Cost: \$4,391,347**

### **Ecosystem Restoration**

OWRC is supportive of the inclusion of funding to support collaborative ecosystem restoration efforts that support the environmental aspects of Reclamation's mission. Funding for the Columbia and Snake River Salmon Recovery Program is essential as Reclamation, the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA Fisheries prepare to meet the court-ordered January 1, 2014, deadline for a new 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 funding for fish passage and fish screening projects that can help meet these requirements.

Additionally, funding for the Klamath Project and the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement 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.

### **Reclamation-wide Aging Infrastructure**

OWRC acknowledges the slight increase in funding to address aging infrastructure needs; however, \$7.3 million is woefully inadequate to support necessary improvements and investigations 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 delays lead to reduced system efficiency, water conservation, and in some instances catastrophic failure. An increase to a minimum of \$10 million would better address high priority infrastructure needs, although \$17 million (\$1 million for each of the 17 Reclamation states) would be a more realistic amount.

### **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 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 Department of Agriculture's FY 2013 budget for the Natural Resources Conservation Service submitted to the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration which can be referred to for details of this request.

We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$1 billion for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY 2013 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation.

Sincerely,

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