

April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Testimony submitted to the United States House Appropriations Committee,  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

March 18, 2015

**RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY 2016 Budget for the Bureau of Reclamation**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) continues to support increased funding for the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Water and Related Resources program and requests that a minimum of \$1 billion be included in the FY 2016 Budget. While we are encouraged by and supportive of the Administration's proposed \$58.1 for the WaterSMART program, we are concerned that the proposed FY 2016 budget of \$805.2 million for the Water and Related Resources program is woefully insufficient to meet the diverse water supply and infrastructure needs in the 17 Western States that Reclamation serves. Additional funding would help leverage other resources and collaborative partnerships through Reclamation's WaterSMART Initiative, as well as support increased coordination between other federal agencies on ecosystem restoration, climate change adaptation, and other water related challenges.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production. About one-half of our members are in Reclamation Projects. Additionally, most of our members have contracts with Reclamation or have been awarded grants under the WaterSMART program which has been greatly beneficial to districts meeting agricultural needs.

**WaterSMART Initiative**

OWRC strongly supports Reclamation's ongoing WaterSMART Initiative and increased funding for the WaterSMART Grants and Water Conservation Field Services Programs—the two programs used the most by Oregon's irrigation districts to support water conservation activities. These programs are an important part of the overall funding package for water resources 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 (WCFSP)***

The 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 the other

WaterSMART 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 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 water needs in our state. These projects have been a key ingredient to the districts' cooperative efforts with other stakeholders in their respective river basins to address in-stream, water quality, and water supply needs of their basins, without reducing the amount of land to which the districts deliver water, and avoiding regulatory actions by Federal or State agencies. There continues to be more applicants than available funding and additional financial resources are 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 surpasses 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.

- ***Deschutes Basin Board of Control, Upper Deschutes Basin Study***- Reclamation will collaborate with the Deschutes Basin Board of Control and the Basin Study workgroup to complete a WaterSMART Basin Study. The study builds upon past work to update groundwater and surface water models, develop a basin specific climate analysis, update supply and demand projections and identify specific actions that can be taken to resolve water issues in the basin. Basin study results will be used to develop a long term basin-wide water management plan to guide sustainable water management actions in the future.  
**Reclamation Funding: \$750,000 State of Oregon Funding: \$750,000**

- Central Oregon Irrigation District, Juniper Ridge Phase II Piping Project** - The Central Oregon Irrigation District will convert 4,500 linear feet of the Pilot Butte canal to spiral wound, coated steel pipe, an improvement expected to result in water savings of 2,552 acre-feet each year. Through a partnership with the Deschutes River Conservancy, 2,000 acre-feet of conserved water will be allocated as a permanent instream flow to support water quality and habitat improvements in a reach of the Crooked River that is critical for endangered Middle Columbia Steelhead. The remaining 552 acre-feet of conserved water will be allocated for permanent instream flow in the middle Deschutes River. The District estimates that 543,343 kilowatt hours of energy savings annually will result from reduced pumping and also estimates that completion of the project will allow for as much as 3,727,545 kilowatt hours of additional power generation annually from the existing Juniper Ridge Hydroelectric Plant. **Reclamation Funding: \$1,500,000 Total Project Cost: \$6,531,166**
- Vale Oregon Irrigation District, Willow Creek Pipeline Project** - The Vale Oregon Irrigation District will convert 61,439 linear feet of lateral canals to enclosed pipe to address seepage losses. The project is expected to result in 5,450 acre-feet of water savings annually, which will remain in Beulah Reservoir, benefitting threatened bull trout. Completion of a new pressurized system is expected to facilitate steps by landowners to convert from flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation in the future. **Reclamation Funding: \$1,258,200 Total Project Cost: \$2,516,400**
- Talent Irrigation District, Jasmine Water Conservation Project** - The Talent Irrigation District in Oregon will convert 1.3 miles of the open Talent Canal to pipelines to address seepage losses. This project is the last phase of an overall conservation project to pipe the lower 4.9 miles of the Talent Canal. The project is expected to result in water savings of 792 acre-feet annually. Conserved water will be stored in nearby reservoirs to enhance deliveries and make more water available for future use. **Reclamation Funding: \$205,643 Total Project Cost: \$411,287**

Additional innovative projects like the ones above could be developed and implemented in Oregon if more funding is made available through the WaterSMART Initiative.

### **Ecosystem Restoration**

Additional funding to support collaborative ecosystem restoration efforts that align with the environmental aspects of Reclamation's mission is also important to OWRC and its members. 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 implement reasonable and prudent alternatives to mitigate impacts to Columbia-Snake river salmon and steelhead under the new Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion. We strongly encourage Reclamation to consider 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.

Furthermore, 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.

### **Climate Change Adaptation and Aging Infrastructure**

OWRC is supportive of developing strategies to address potential climate change related impacts to water resources. It is imperative that the nation's water infrastructure is capable of handling more frequent and severe weather events, changes in precipitation/snowpack, and other climate related impacts to water resources. Reclamation needs additional funding to coordinate and leverage state, local and other federal resources to support necessary evaluations and improvements of water infrastructure in the 17 Western States related to potential climate change impacts. Many of the 824 dams and reservoirs that Reclamation manages (and associated delivery systems) were built 50 to 100 years ago and are already 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.

Providing funding to evaluate and improve water infrastructure in the face of climate change will ensure that Reclamation reservoirs and associated delivery systems can continue to provide essential water supplies used to grow food and other agricultural crops—a vital part of our local, state, and national economy, as well as ensuring food security. Reclamation's WaterSMART Basin Study program has proved to be an effective tool for analyzing the effects of climate change and drought and should be utilized more to address climate change. Past and future studies will prepare river basins throughout the 17 Western States for developing solutions to water shortages through conservation as well as building innovative new storage facilities, large and small.

We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$1 billion for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program for FY 2016. Providing increased funding for the WaterSMART Initiative and other related programs is a wise investment that will yield benefits for our nation's economy, environment, and communities that depend on water resources. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY 2016 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation.

Sincerely,

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