

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress
Submitted to the United States House Appropriations Committee,
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
April 18, 2017

RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY18 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 FY18 Budget. OWRC would like to see at least \$50 million for the WaterSMART program and we remain concerned that the proposed FY18 budget for the Water and Related Resources program will be 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, drought 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 drought.

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.

- ***Santiam Water Control District, Irrigation System SCADA Automation and Water Measurement Improvement Project-*** The Santiam Water Control District, near Salem, Oregon, will automate numerous manual control gate and diversion structures within the canal system, including the automation of the District's small hydropower plant. The improvements will also include new and improved water measurement capabilities. More precise deliveries are expected to result in annual water savings of 2,150 acre-feet.
Reclamation Funding: \$300,000 Total Project Cost: \$941,700
- ***Klamath Irrigation District, Stukel Spill Project*** – The Klamath Irrigation District in Klamath Falls, Oregon will design and construct a large capacity operational spill structure near the Stukel pump site. The spill will consist of a concrete intake structure and electric actuated roller gate, and a pipe discharge with measuring device and supervisory control and data acquisition intertie, which will discharge to Lost River. The project will provide for better management of water deliveries which will result in the reduction of diversions from Upper Klamath Lake. **Reclamation Funding: \$80,535 Total Project Cost: \$231,666**

- Three Sisters Irrigation District, Main Canal Pipeline and Micro Hydro Generation Project*** - The Three Sisters Irrigation District in Oregon will pipe 14,000 feet of the open Watson-McKenzie Main Canal. The project is expected to result in annual water savings of 1,900 acre feet that is currently being lost to seepage. A portion of the conserved water will be dedicated for instream flows to Whychus Creek in order to improve riparian habitat and benefit Bullhead Trout, Steelhead, Chinook and Sockeye Salmon, Oregon Spotted Frogs, willow flycatcher and yellow breasted chat. The District is working with the Deschutes River Conservancy to dedicated approximately 1,400 acre feet annually that will be conserved as a result of this project into a water right held by the State of Oregon. In addition, with completion of this project, pressurized water will eliminate electrical pumps on farm, which are using over 3 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually. The pressurized pipeline resulting from this project will also allow farmers who receive deliveries from the District to implement further improvements. As part of an existing partnership, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide assistance, as available, for those farmers to expedite coordinated water conservation improvements in the area. The project also includes the installation of 4 micro-hydro turbines, which have a combined energy capacity of 200 kilowatts. **Reclamation Funding: \$1,000,000**
Total Project Cost: \$4,737,906
- North Unit Irrigation District, Lateral 58-11 Piping Project*** - The North Unit Irrigation District in Madra, Oregon, will pipe two miles of the 58-11 open ditch lateral to address seepage losses. The project will also include installation of 8 pressurized deliveries to District landowners. The project is expected to result in annual water savings of 570 acre-feet. Through a partnership with the Deschutes River Conservancy, conserved water will be marketed to restore instream flows in a critical reach of the Crooked River.
Reclamation Funding: \$704,478 Total Project Cost: \$1,525,545
- Tumalo Irrigation District, Piping of the Tumalo Feed Canal (Phase IV)*** - The Tumalo Irrigation District near Bend, Oregon, will complete Phase IV of the Tumalo Feed Canal Piping Project. Phase IV of the project includes piping 3,400 feet of remaining 6-mile open canal system, which is expected to result in annual water savings of 776 acre-feet currently being lost to seepage and evaporation. The conserved water will be dedicated to the State of Oregon for permanent instream flows for use in Tumalo Creek, Crescent Creek, and the Little Deschutes River. **Reclamation Funding: \$704,478 Total Project Cost: \$1,525,545**

Further innovative projects like the ones above could be developed and implemented in Oregon if more funding is made available through the WaterSMART Initiative. Additionally, OWRC would like to see the funding cap increased from \$1 million to \$5 million in areas where there are known endangered, threatened or vulnerable species. By increasing the funding cap, Reclamation would have the ability to fund projects aimed at improving species habitat at a higher level, allowing for these important projects to move forward.

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 ongoing efforts in the Deschutes Basin related to the development of the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) should be included in Reclamation's FY18 budget. Specifically, funding similar to that received by the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project should be allocated to North Unit Irrigation District and Ochoco Irrigation District for continued work on development of the HCP and for implementation of conservation measures and monitoring the effects of the conservation measures developed under the HCP. This funding will help support ongoing efforts to improve water supplies to meet the myriad of agricultural and environmental needs that depend upon it. Financial support for these types of collaborative restoration efforts will lead to implementable, cost-effective water resources solutions that help reduce conflict and expensive litigation.

Drought Planning and Aging Infrastructure

OWRC is supportive of developing strategies to address potential drought 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 drought 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 drought effects. 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 drought 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 drought. 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 FY18. 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 FY18 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation.

Sincerely,

April Snell, Executive Director

Phone: 503-363-0121 Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301