

**Alliance for the Wild Rockies - Alpine Lakes Protection Society - East Kachess
Homeowner's Association - Endangered Species Coalition - Federation of Western
Outdoor Clubs - Friends of Bumping Lake - Friends of the Clearwater – Friends of the
Earth - Great Old Broads for Wilderness - Kachess Community Association –
Kachess Ridge Maintenance Association - Kittitas County Fire Protection District #8 –
Kootenai Environmental Alliance – Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society –
North Cascades Conservation Council –
Western Watersheds Project - Wise Use Movement**

Date: November 29, 2016

Dear Conferee on S. 2012, (the Energy Policy Modernization Act, now the “North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2016,” currently the subject of a House-Senate Conference):

The above listed organizations are writing in strong opposition to S. 1694, a provision which was included as a Senate Floor amendment to the Senate version of S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act, now found as “Title X, Part III,” a water project bill for the Yakima River Basin in central Washington State.

The ‘Yakima Plan’ authorized by this provision was prepared by an ‘advisory group’ that did not comply with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. At a likely cost of over **\$5 billion, it includes a collection of water projects** primarily to shore up agricultural water supply, with no requirements for water conservation by wasteful irrigation districts. There is nothing in the record to document that this plan can accomplish what it claims. It is bad national water policy for this legislation to authorize continued federal funding of water storage project studies in the Yakima Basin that have a documented negative Benefit/Cost ratio, according to the Washington State Water Research Center award-winning 2014 report to the Washington State Legislature.

https://swwrc.wsu.edu/documents/2014/12/ybip_bca_swwrc_dec2014.pdf

This provision would also authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to enter into agreements with Yakima irrigation districts to construct a massive water pumping project out of Lake Kachess, as well as a tunnel between Lake Keechelus and Lake Kachess (two existing Reclamation projects), for which feasibility studies have not been conducted, nor have economic or environmental impact studies been produced, and for which no final plan exists. It is bad national water policy to authorize hundreds of millions in construction as additions to the Bureau of Reclamation Yakima Project, in absence of any project designs or a completed Environmental Impact Statement.

In addition, S. 1694 received only a single Senate Committee hearing, again, without project-level documentation, and where only project supporters were allowed to testify. The House version of the Energy Bill (H.R. 8) contains no Yakima water projects provisions, and H.R. 4686, **a companion bill to S. 1694, has never received a House Committee hearing**.

The Yakima Plan itself identifies at least 170,000 acre-feet of water conservation opportunities, and this does not include savings from water markets that could be implemented during a drought year. S. 1694, however, would continue to allow irrigation district water conservation to be voluntary. In addition, over \$200 million in existing federal project authorization funding remains available to the Bureau of Reclamation from P.L. 103-434, a 1994 federal law for Yakima project water conservation and efficiency improvements and fish passage facilities – yet the 1994 water conservation targets set by Congress have still not been met by Reclamation and irrigators.

Proposed water projects, such as a new Bumping Lake dam within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest would destroy ancient forests, as well as endangered species habitat, while other projects, such as a new billion dollar-plus Wymer dam, would flood private property containing sage-grouse habitat.

No credible case has been made to authorize these enormously expensive federal projects, or to fund more water project studies, where independent experts reporting to the Washington State Legislature have already shown they cannot be economically justified. Congress does not have before it the requisite information that should always be required for any such authorization, let alone to be included as an add-on to the S. 2012 energy bill.

S. 1694 is bad national water policy and should be stripped from any House/Senate Conference Energy Bill.

cc: Washington Congressional Delegation

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