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TESTIMONY OF THE SIERRA CLUB, OLYMPIC FOREST COALITION, AND
NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL*

before the
Senate Ways and Means Committee
Olympia, WA

April 10, 2013
On SB 5035

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity for the Sierra Club, the North Cascades Conservation Council, and the Olympic Forest Coalition to provide testimony on the proposed House Capital Budget. All these groups have previously provided testimony to this Committee on either January 21, or February 22 in opposition to Yakima Basin Plan bills.

There are cost effective elements of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Plan such as habitat conservation and enhancement, agricultural and municipal and domestic water conservation, and water banking that the Sierra Club, NCCC, and OFCO could support, and other elements such as fish passage, if feasible, aquifer storage, the Kachess inactive storage, and Keechelus to Kachess Conveyance that may be supported after additional and thorough economic and environmental review.

The Sierra Club, NCCC, and OFCO, however, remain opposed to the Yakima Plan because it remains controversial and opposed by 30 local, state, regional, and national organizations, does not comply with Federal and state laws, has adverse off-road vehicle recreation impacts on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and supports the construction of new irrigation dams that have not been shown to be economical.

Since then more voices opposing the Yakima Plan on economic grounds have come forward. Copies are being provided to the Committee of an economic analysis by retired Washington State University professors Norman Whittlesey and Walter Butcher. They make several recommendations including the following:

“The water storage components of the YRB plan should not be funded nor their proposed feasibility studies funded. Wymer reservoir is already known to be economically infeasible based on water storage projects studied in 2008. . .”

In conclusion, so long as more economically wasteful water projects are proposed for the Yakima Basin and damaging proposals for the Okanogan-Wentachee National Forest are included, the Sierra Club, NCCC and OFCO remain opposed to the Yakima Plan. Thank you.

** Because the hearing took place so soon after the release of the budget, the above testimony was delivered verbally and copies of the written statement were not provided to the Committee.*