

Janine Blaeloch, Director
Western Lands Project

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND WATER RESOURCES
U.S. SENATE ON
S.1694

July 7, 2015

The Western Lands Project is a non-profit, membership organization conducting research, outreach, and advocacy for reform in federal land exchange policy. We also scrutinize a broad range of projects that propose to sell, give away, or relinquish public control of public lands. We submit this testimony in opposition to the above-named legislation. Please include the following testimony of the Western Lands Project on S. 1694.

We are opposed to passage of this bill, as introduced.

The Western Lands Project provided scoping comments on the Yakima Plan Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) on June 7, 2011, as well as detailed comments on the DPEIS on January 1, 2012. We remain disappointed that the Bureau of Reclamation failed to provide a range of alternatives in the DPEIS and did not adequately respond to our comments. In addition, we remain very concerned that after the close of comments on the DPEIS, the Yakima Workgroup adopted a new Yakima Plan element that was not included in the DPEIS for public comment to create two new National Recreation Areas within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest with 41,000 acres to be dedicated to off-road vehicle use.

The Yakima Plan contains environmental damaging projects such as a new Bumping Lake dam, which would flood ancient forest road-less area adjacent to the William O. Douglas Wilderness Area, and endangered species habitat for Northern spotted owls and bull trout and a Wymer dam, which would flood shrub-steppe habitat for sage grouse.

We urge you to oppose S. 1694. Thank you.