



August 12, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
Members, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
United State Senate  
Washington D.C. 20151

Dear Senator Murkowski and Committee Members,

RE: S. 1694 Authorizing Phase III of the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project

The Seattle Audubon Society opposes passage of S. 1694, that includes the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan and FEIS, and we protest that the July 7th hearing on the bill in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee allowed no opportunity for opponents of the bill to testify. We also strongly oppose Senator Cantwell's intention of offering S. 1694 as an amendment to the bipartisan Energy Modernization Act of 2015.

The Seattle Audubon Society is a member of the National Audubon Society and has over 5000 members. We have been a leader in the northwest on the protection of old growth forests and the Northern Spotted Owl since 1988. The Seattle Audubon Society has opposed the inclusion of the new Bumping Lake dam and expanded reservoir since 2011, and we have sent a representative to the quarterly Workgroup meetings. Our primary objection has been the loss of over 1000 acres of old growth forests that are critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl, a species listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened in 1990, and currently in serious decline. Bumping Lake's old-growth forests are included in the USFWS NSO Recovery Plan as significant habitat. We have submitted testimony in the Washington State Legislature multiple times in opposition to this component of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. However, because the Yakima Basin Plan is "Integrated," this has served as a device to insulate the Plan from review or critique. The Workgroup insists that removing one part would unravel the whole plan. The Workgroup has brought two previously warring stakeholders together to forge a plan that serves their interests to the detriment of other stakeholders, the environment and taxpayers.

The reality of climate change and the predicted consequences to this area including a lack of snowpack, drought, wildfire, low stream levels, and higher stream and reservoir water temperatures, require that you consider these impacts to the Yakima Basin and reconsider this Plan. There have been persistent unanswered concerns about declining rainfall levels which would result in the new expensive storage reservoir not filling with sufficient amounts of water. The proposed fish passage may result in salmon and bull trout dying in the warming water of the expanded reservoir, or not making it up to Bumping Lake at all because of warm waters in the Lower Yakima and Columbia Rivers. The 2000 acres of forest that would be cut and inundated may serve a better function in lowering carbon emissions, retaining water to be slowly released,

and for shading and cooling the Upper and Lower Bumping River and the other Bumping Lake tributaries.

Again, we oppose S. 1694 and request the removal of authorization and financing of the Bumping Lake Dam and expanded reservoir from the bill.

Sincerely,

Seattle Audubon Society

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