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TESTIMONY OF THE SIERRA CLUB
before the
House Washington Waters Task Force
Olympia, WA
October 5, 2015
On SB 5628

Co-Chairs and members of the Task Force, thank you for the opportunity for the Sierra Club to provide testimony on SB 5628. While we appreciate that it is designed to fund a number of important water projects on such things as stormwater and floodplains by design, we object strongly to the proposed water storage projects that would be funded under this proposal. The storage projects would fund destruction of ESA critical habitat for the Northern spotted owl and bull trout through expansion of Bumping Lake as well as destruction of important sage grouse habitat through construction of Wymer Dam. The bill would give priority to the controversial 2012 Yakima Plan in Sec. 105(6)(c) by referencing RCW 90.38.010 and 90.90.020. We find ourselves in agreement with the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association, January 21, 2015, Policy Memorandum, that the Yakima Basin plan, is “a costly and economically questionable conglomeration of actions,” and that the Yakima Plan proponents, “may have inadequately defined a least-cost path and insufficiently explored their own financial development capability.”

New Section 107 directs the joint legislature audit and review committee to work with the Department of Ecology to determine if appropriate and reliable benefit/cost methodologies exist. This is problematic because Ecology’s Office of Columbia River for the past six years refused to do any benefit/cost analysis of individual Yakima Plan water storage projects and is actively undermining the Washington Water Resource Center’s Benefit/Cost analysis requested by the Legislature in 2013. The WRC’s analysis demonstrates that project such as a new Bumping Lake or Wymer Reservoir are not cost effective or a wise use of taxpayer money. Before any more state taxpayer money is spent on water projects, the Office of Finance should prepare a performance audit on the Office of Columbia River to review the water supply benefits of the \$200 million provided to the Office since 2006. We have attached a recent op-ed from the Spokesman-Review that addresses our concerns. Thank you.