

The Western Coalition of Arid States

WESTCAS



TESTIMONY
(Submitted for the Record)

OF

LARRY LIBEU
PRESIDENT

WESTERN COALITION OF ARID STATES (WESTCAS)

CONCERNING

THE FY08 BUDGET OF THE US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

March 16, 2007

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) would like to submit the following statement concerning the FY08 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation. My name is Larry Libeu and I am the President of the organization.

WESTCAS is a coalition of approximately 125 water and wastewater agencies, cities and towns, and professional associated focused on water quality and quantity issues in the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas.

The Bureau's overall Budget for FY '08 is \$958.4 million. The portion of the Budget that WESTCAS has interest in, the Water and Related Resources Account has \$816.1 million dollars, which represents a decrease of \$17,227,000 from FY '07. It is within this account that Water Reclamation/Reuse Title XVI is funded. The proposed funding level for FY '08 is \$10.1 million. The Title XVI program was authorized by PL 102-575..This program provides a central focus for Reclamation's efforts and expertise in planning, environmental review and construction of new projects.

The Title XVI water recycling program within the BOR provides a excellent cost-share mechanism for helping to drought proof the West. Projects developed by this program allow agencies to reduce their dependence on the scarce imported supplies from the Colorado River and other western watersheds. WESTCAS believes that increased funding for the program is needed to begin reducing the ever increasing backlog of authorized, but unfunded projects as well as assist in addressing the serious drought conditions throughout Reclamation states. We believe that funding this at least at the level of \$50 million a year is necessary to clear the approximate backlog of \$350 million for this program.

We have two caveats in this regard. We believe the Committee should provide directive language to the Bureau of Reclamation to convene a meeting of all of the project sponsors for authorized projects in this program, ask them to bring their construction schedules and financing information so a 5 year schedule for completion can be worked out consistent with increased levels of funding for the program. We would be pleased to lend our expertise and experience to such a meeting. We further believe, and we are just as disappointed as the Committee, that the Bureau should have already produced an overall 5 year funding program consistent with the directive in last years Committee report.

Our second caveat is for the Appropriations Committee to have a dialogue with the authorizing Committees regarding this program indicating that any new project for the Title 16 program will not be funded until after the backlog of all ready authorized projects is complete. Further, in order to receive funding, the priority should be set by those projects that are consistent with the individual State's Water Plan, and recommended and supported by that State's Governor and shall not have elements funded

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by other Federal agency programs. Priority shall be placed on cost effectiveness of the water and technology being developed and how the project fits into the comprehensive water plan for the area.

Another program that WESTCAS would recommend increased funding is the Colorado River Salinity Control Program, Title II. Increased agricultural use and drainage as well as continued degradation caused by natural elements such as shale and return flows from urban centers are creating an increased salinity content to the waters of the Colorado River. WESTCAS firmly believes that this element of the Bureau's budget should be funded at the \$26 million dollar level. This would represent an increase of \$13 million over the proposed FY '08 budget amount.

WESTCAS supports increased funding for the CAL-FED program. The FY '08 budget indicates a decrease from prior years. WESTCAS strongly recommends that this item in the Bureau's budget be increased to \$40.52 million dollars. The current proposed budget has funding set at \$31.75 million. WESTCAS would recommend the following adjustments in the BOR CAL-FED funding proposal: Los Vaqueros Storage Study, +\$3.27 million, Lower San Joaquin River Fish Screen Projects, +\$3.50 million, Refuge Water Supply Diversification, +\$.50 million, Environmental Water Account +\$3.0 million, and Administration -\$1.50million. With these adjustments the new budget amount would be \$40.52 million.

WESTCAS also would recommend increased funding for the Middle Rio Grande Project to \$24million and the Lower Colorado River Operations Program to \$17 million.

We would like to be able to support funding for the Bureau's Water 2025 program, but absent authorization we withhold our support at this time. We do believe greater integrated resource planning and water resource planning is need for the West. We would hope the Committee would consider using the information that is being developed by the Western States Water Council report in this area as a tool for evaluation future budget requests.

We also believe the Bureau of Reclamation should be doing more with regard to drought preparedness. The title XVI program is important in this regard, but it is not intended to be used throughout the West. Relying on an "emergency" approach to drought is not an effective way to address this issue. There are emergencies associated with drought, but better planning and an ongoing well funded program in each of the states is needed. We recommend at least \$1 million per state to address this ongoing issue.

We believe that overall a \$150 million dollar increase for the Bureau's Water and Related Resources Account would be helpful in addressing the water resource needs of the West before water quality and quantity issues become a greater crisis as the infrastructure ages, the population grows and environmental needs continue to be addressed.

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