

CONVEYING WATER FACILITIES TO THE NORTHERN COLORADO WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to H.R. 4389, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4389) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain water distribution facilities to the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4389) was read the third time and passed.

MISSOURI RIVER BASIN PROJECT

PROSSER DIVERSION DAM

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent the Energy Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2984 and H.R. 3986. I further ask consent the Senate proceed en bloc to their consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2984) to direct the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Reclamation, to convey to the Loup Basin Reclamation District, the Sargent River Irrigation District, and the Farwell Irrigation District, Nebraska, property comprising the assets of the Middle Loup Division of the Missouri River Basin Project, Nebraska;

A bill (H.R. 3986) to provide for a study of the engineering feasibility of a water exchange in lieu of electrification of the Chandler Pumping Plant at Prosser Diversion Dam, Washington.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bills.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, today, the Senate will pass H.R. 3986, a bill introduced by Representative DOC HASTINGS, R-Washington, that will authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to study the feasibility of moving the intake system for the Kennewick Irrigation District from the Yakima River to the Columbia River. I introduced a similar bill earlier this year, S. 2163, which was passed by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee earlier this month. The Senate's action today sends this bill, critical to Central Washington's efforts to recover threatened and endangered salmon, to the President's desk—an achievement long sought by the Yakama Indian Nation and the irrigators of the Yakima River Basin.

Disputes over how to allocate and use water have always been contentious in the Pacific Northwest, and the disputes

have only become more difficult as the region has been forced to deal with the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead species. Over the past year, however, I have been pleased to support a new era of cooperation among tribes and various irrigation districts in Eastern Washington. An area of consensus has developed around the concept of "pump exchanges," which move the intake systems of irrigation districts from over appropriated streams and rivers to rivers downstream with more water. In July, I introduced legislation that authorizes the study of a pump exchange for the Okanogan Irrigation District and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. I hope this legislation will receive quick approval during the 107th Congress.

H.R. 3986 will amend the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program, YRBWEP, first approved by Congress in 1994 (P.L. 103-434). That legislation established a comprehensive framework for increasing critical flows in the Yakima River in order to reverse a longstanding trend of declining salmon and steelhead runs. One portion of that legislation, Section 1208, authorized a specific project to electrify hydraulic turbines at the Chandler Pumping Plant near Prosser, Washington. By converting these pumps from hydraulic to electrical power, an additional 400 second feet of water would be added to a 12-mile stretch of the Yakima River below Prosser Dam called Chandler Reach. This project would increase survival rates and provide important new habitat for both the anadromous and resident fisheries in this critical section of the Yakima River. This electrification project is still a good approach to augmenting Yakima River flows, but early in its implementation an even better idea was developed that can nearly double the benefits projected from electrification.

The pump exchange approach proposed in H.R. 3986 could result in completely eliminating the need to divert water at Prosser Dam and Wanawish Dam for use by the Kennewick Irrigation District, K.I.D., and the Columbia River Irrigation District, C.I.D. This plan will require building a new pumping plant on the Columbia River and a pipeline to connect this new facility to K.I.D. This approach could add back to the Yakima River during critical flow periods the entire 749 second feet of water now diverted at Prosser Dam. This project might well be the key to the success of the rest of the YRBWEP program. For the extensive efforts being made farther upstream to be entirely successful, the lower sections of the Yakima River must provide the conditions necessary for salmon and steelhead to survive their journey to and from the upper river and its tributaries. The Chandler Reach and the lower Yakima must have sufficient water at the right time for anadromous fish to be able to transit this area. Without it, the programs upstream will be less effective.

The legislation passed today authorizes the Bureau of Reclamation to spend some of the funds previously authorized for the electrification project to develop this new approach. There are several studies and undertakings necessary to determine with certainty the efficacy and cost of this pump exchange project. These include carrying out a feasibility study, including an estimate of project benefits, an environmental impact analysis, and preparing a feasibility level design and cost estimates as well as securing critical right-of-way areas.

This change in approach to enhancing flows in the lower Yakima is enthusiastically supported by the resource agencies of the State of Washington, including the Washington State Department of Ecology, as well as by the Northwest Power Planning Council, the Bonneville Power Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

It is important to note that a change in the diversion for K.I.D. from the Yakima River to the Columbia River will completely change the current operational philosophy of the district. It will evolve from a relatively simple system relying on gravity to supply its customers to one of significant additional complexity involving a major pump station and pressure pipeline to the main feeder canals. This remodeling of K.I.D. will have significant impact on the existing system and its users during construction, startup, and transition. That is why it is essential for K.I.D. to be in a position to develop these facilities in a way that best fits their current and future operational goals and causes the least impact to the district water users. This legislation requires the Bureau of Reclamation to give K.I.D. substantial control over the planning and design work in this study with the Bureau, of course, having final approval. It is an approach that will continue local improvement and support, which is vital to the success of this project and other projects.

I thank Representative DOC HASTINGS for his leadership on this bill in the House of Representatives and appreciate the support of my colleagues in passing this bill that will provide a crucial component to the salmon recovery efforts in the Yakima Basin.

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent the bills be read the third time and passed, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, any statements be printed in the RECORD with the above occurring en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 2984) was read the third time and passed.

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