

RESOLUTION
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
regarding the
THE RECLAMATION FUND
Medora, North Dakota
July 11, 2008

WHEREAS, in the West, water is indeed our “life blood” - a vital and scarce resource the availability of which has and continues to circumscribe growth, development and our economic well being and environmental quality of life - the wise conservation and management of which is critical to maintaining human life, health, welfare, property and environmental and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the critical importance of water in the development of the West, the Congress passed the Reclamation Act on June 17, 1902 and provided monies “reserved, set aside, and appropriated as a special fund in the Treasury to be known as the ‘reclamation fund,’ to be used in the examination and survey for and the construction and maintenance of irrigation works for the storage, diversion, and development of water for the reclamation of arid and semiarid land...” in seventeen western states, to be continually invested and reinvested; and

WHEREAS, then President Theodore Roosevelt stated, “The work of the Reclamation Service in developing the larger opportunities of the western half of our country for irrigation is more important than almost any other movement. The constant purpose of the Government in connection with the Reclamation Service has been to use the water resources of the public lands for the ultimate greatest good of the greatest number; in other words, to put upon the land permanent homemakers, to use and develop it for themselves and for their children and children=s children...;”¹ and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior was authorized and directed to “locate and construct” water resource projects to help people settle and prosper in this arid region, leading to the establishment of the Reclamation Service – today’s Bureau of Reclamation; and

WHEREAS, western states and the Bureau of Reclamation have worked in collaboration to meet the water-related needs of the citizens of the West, and protect the interests of all Americans, recognizing changing public values and the need to put scarce water resources to beneficial use for the “ultimate greatest good of the greatest number;” and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Reclamation has built facilities that include 348 reservoirs with the capacity to store 245 million acre-feet of water, irrigating approximately 10 million acres of farmland that produce 60 percent of the nation’s vegetables and 25 percent of its fruits and nuts, as well as providing

¹State of the Union Address, 1907

water to about 31 million people for municipal and industrial uses, while generating more than 42 billion kilowatt hours of energy each year from 58 hydroelectric power plants for some nine million people, and further providing flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits; and

WHEREAS, project sponsors have and continue to repay the cost of these facilities, which also produce power receipts that annually return about \$600 million to the United States Treasury, prevent some \$500 million in damages due to floods each year, and generate billions of dollars in economic returns from agricultural production; and

WHEREAS, the water and power resources developed under and flood control provided by the Reclamation Act over the last century supported the development and continue to be critical to the maintenance of numerous and diverse rural communities across the West and the major metropolitan areas of Albuquerque, Amarillo, Boise, Denver, El Paso, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Lubbock, Phoenix, Portland, Reno, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Seattle, Tucson and numerous other smaller cities; and

WHEREAS, western States are committed to continuing to work cooperatively with the Department of Interior and Bureau of Reclamation to meet our present water needs in the West and those of future generations, within the framework of state water law, as envisioned by President Roosevelt and the Congress in 1902; and

WHEREAS, according to the Administration's FY 2009 request actual and estimated appropriations from the Reclamation Fund are \$981 million for FY 2007, \$1.05 billion for FY 2008, and \$870 million for FY 2009 -- compared to actual and estimated receipts of \$1.85 billion, \$2.09 billion and \$2.49 billion respectively; and

WHEREAS, the unobligated balance in the Reclamation Fund continues to grow from an actual balance of \$5.67 billion at the end of FY 2006, to an estimated \$9.23 billion by the end of FY 2009; and

WHEREAS, under the Reclamation Act of 1902, the Reclamation Fund was envisioned as the principle means to finance federal western water and power projects with revenues from western resources and its receipts are derived from water and power sales, project repayments, certain receipts from public land sales, leases and rentals in the 17 western states, as well as certain oil and mineral-related royalties - but these receipts are only available for expenditure pursuant to annual appropriation acts; and

WHEREAS, with growing receipts in part due to high energy prices and declining federal expenditures for Reclamation purposes, the unobligated figure gets larger and larger, while the money is actually spent elsewhere for other federal purposes contrary to the Congress' original intent.

Position No.304
(See Past Positions No. 241 and 265)

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Western States Water Council asks the Administration and the Congress to fully utilize the funds provided through the Reclamation Act and subsequent acts for their intended purpose in the continuing conservation, development and wise use of western resources to meet western water-related needs -- recognizing and continuing to defer to the primacy of western water laws in allocating water among uses -- and work with the States to meet the challenges of the future. Such "needs" may include the construction of Reclamation facilities incorporated as part of a Congressionally approved Indian water right settlements, rehabilitation of aging infrastructure, appropriate environmental restoration efforts in consultation with affected states, and other legitimate needs that may be financed by these reserves.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administration and the Congress investigate the advantages of converting the Reclamation Fund from a special account to a true revolving trust fund with annual receipts to be appropriated for authorized purposes in the year following their deposit (similar to some other federal authorities and trust accounts).