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Speech by Commissioner of Reclamation Floyd E. Dominy,

Department of the Interior, Before the
Washington State Reclamation Association
Yakima, Washington - November 3, 1966

Water in Washington's Future

Whenever I come to the State of Washington I am impressed anew by its wealth of natural resources and by the good life that has evolved--and continues to evolve--from the wise use of these resources.

If the archeologists had not located the Garden of Eden over there in Asia Minor between the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers, we might make a very good case for its having been in the Columbia River Basin. Nature has been lavish here with all the substances required for man's needs and pleasures. But, even as in the Garden of Eden, she has decreed that man himself must conserve these blessings.

In the 19th century, when farsighted men who had determined to settle in this natural wonderland were seeking ways to develop the area, they turned to the great river which is the lifeline of the Northwest. They perceived that the Columbia, with its many tributaries--the Willamette, Yakima, the Okanogan, the Snake, the Wenatchee, and others--would be the key to their future.

The Bureau of Reclamation is proud of the part it has played during the past 60 years in helping you to achieve positive benefits from the control and use of your water resources.

The strong ties of friendship between the Bureau and the Yakima Valley go back to the days when the Federal Reclamation program was in its infancy. The Yakima Project was one of the first authorized under the Reclamation Act of 1902. Our program and the valley have grown up together over the years, and today, this project area is one of the show-places of western irrigated agriculture.

Its six storage dams, with a total impoundment capacity of 1,070,000 acre-feet, provide water for the irrigation of well over 400,000 acres, on which the average annual gross crop value is nearly \$90 million,

considerably more than the approximate \$63 million Federal investment in project facilities. The Chandler and Roza powerplants add 23,250 kilowatts of installed capacity to the hydroelectric generation of the Northwest. In addition, the reservoirs and waterways provide significant flood control, recreation, fish and wildlife enhancement, and water quality control benefits.

Though this project has been under way for more than six decades, there is need today for expansion and improvement. I am confident that the very near future will see authorization of the Kennewick Extension and of the enlargement of Bumping Lake, and that the years ahead will bring further development.

Within your State, Reclamation has completed facilities to bring water to about 961,000 acres of irrigable land. More than 800,000 acres were irrigated by these facilities in 1965, when the gross value of crops grown on them amounted to \$154 million. More than 410,000 acres are now under irrigation on the Columbia Basin Project; 5,400 acres are served by the Chief Joseph Dam Project; and about 4,200 by the Okanogan Project. Over half of the lands on the 7,500-acre Spokane Valley Project, which is now under construction, received water service this year, and the remainder will be served next irrigation season.

Work is presently under way on two other new units of the Chief Joseph Dam Project, both primarily rehabilitation and enlargement of existing systems--the Oroville-Tonasket and the Whitestone-Coulee.

The 89th Congress authorized two new Reclamation projects in Washington. One was the \$12.4 million Manson Unit of the Chelan Division, Chief Joseph Dam Project, which involves rehabilitation and extension of an irrigation system serving about 5,800 acres along the north shore of Lake Chelan.

The second recently authorized Washington project, of course, is the Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee Dam. It will add 3.6 million kilowatts to the existing 1,974,000 kilowatt capacity of the Grand Coulee facility, and insure that Washington State will still be able to boast the largest

hydropower plant in the western hemisphere. Construction of the mammoth new plant became not merely feasible, but inevitable with negotiation of the U.S.-Canadian Treaty on the Columbia River. The 12 additional generators will take full advantage of improved stream-flows which can be expected from construction of the 15-1/2 million acre-feet of upstream storage on the Columbia in Canada and the 5 million acre-feet to be impounded by Libby Dam on the Kootenai River in the United States. They will also make effective interim use of the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie, which will create a major and ready market for capacity and seasonal energy prior to the time it will be needed in the Pacific Northwest.

With a benefit-to-cost ratio estimated at better than 3 to 1, the Third Powerplant will cost about \$390 million to build. Present construction schedule calls for the first unit to be producing by 1973, and all 12 units to be on the line by 1983.

Legislation enacted by the 89th Congress to establish a Columbia Basin Account promises an improved and wider foundation for future financing of irrigation development in the Pacific Northwest. The policy incorporated in the new law recognizes that the development of our land and water resources must be planned and aided financially on a basin-wide basis. Your projects of the future should move ahead much faster as a result of this legislation.

Bills also were introduced in the last Session of Congress to authorize several other major Northwest projects, and these will doubtless be reintroduced in the next Session. One of these proposals would give a green light to the Southwest Idaho Water Development Project, which would provide irrigation for half a million acres stretching from the Bruneau plateau over the Mountain Home Desert, and the Payette Valley to the lands of the Weiser River Basin. The large-scale multiple project also includes flood control, power generation, municipal and industrial water supply, recreation, and fish and wildlife conservation benefits. This tremendous proposed project, which looks toward the maximum optimum beneficial use of southwestern Idaho's lands and water, will involve the inter-related use of available water from the Snake, Boise, and Payette Rivers, with actual exchanges and trans-basin diversions where needed.

Another subject of an authorization bill introduced in the 89th Congress was the Touchet Division, Walla Walla Project, which proposed a 52,600 acre-foot reservoir at the Dayton site on the Touchet River to provide water for multiple purposes, among them the initial irrigation of some 10,000 acres, with another 10,000 acres to be developed later.

Other potential developments being studied by the Bureau could bring another 100,000 acres under irrigation in the Walla Walla River Basin.

These are but a few of the projects in varying stages of planning and development. There are many more, ranging from the Willamette Valley of Oregon to the Flathead area of Montana, and the Upper Snake River Basin in Idaho and Wyoming. The great expanses along both shores of the Columbia below McNary Dam also offer opportunity for major development.

These are all project possibilities of the future on which you and we must work together to make the maximum local use possible of your magnificent resources. Recently, it was my pleasure to address two other very active groups whose efforts, like yours, are directed at the optimum beneficial development of the land, water, and associated resources of the Pacific Northwest. On October 18th, I was a guest of the Inland Empire Waterways Association at Walla Walla, and on October 25th, with the Oregon Reclamation Congress at Grants Pass.

To both these groups I explained the Bureau's position on trans-basin and trans-region diversion of water, particularly, diversion of Columbia River water to the Pacific Southwest, and today I should like to talk to you about this important subject.

First of all, let me say without equivocation, that the Bureau of Reclamation has not, does not, and will not support any recommendation calling for the diversion of water from the Pacific Northwest which is now or in the future will be necessary to the region's own growth.

We do believe that definitive studies should be made to determine the requirements for and availability of water not only in the Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest, but in other areas as well, as would be accomplished under the direction of a National Water Commission. We

hope that such studies would conclusively determine if an area, even with proper management and use, still faces a critical water shortage. It could also determine if there are areas that have water in surplus to all possible foreseeable needs.

Congress would certainly want to have all these facts available before even considering whether major diversion of water from one basin to another is economically feasible and worthwhile.

There will unquestionably be a revived effort in the 90th Congress to secure authorization of the Colorado River Basin Project, with the Central Arizona Unit as the first order of business. At the direction of Secretary of the Interior Udall, we are examining all alternatives to the controversial points at issue, particularly some means of financing other than the proposed plan to construct additional dams on the Colorado River.

However, one hard, cold fact is that the Colorado River is overextended. The average annual virgin flow of the Colorado is less than one-tenth of the 180 million acre-feet comparable flow of the Columbia at its mouth. This comparison makes it easy to understand how less well endowed areas than yours might covet some of your vast water wealth. There is no doubt that the Colorado's flow must somehow be supplemented unless we want to sacrifice the growth--perhaps even the survival--of an important region of our nation. It is not the American way to let such things happen, and I do not believe for an instant that it will happen now.

We all need help and cooperation from one another. Even the water-rich state of Washington--and you are trice-blessed--needs help occasionally. While we have moved forward with work on the Columbia Basin Project as rapidly as funds would permit, I know that you are impatient for greater progress. I hope that the Administration and representatives of other states will feel inclined to play the role of "brother's keeper" for Washington in the 90th Congress, for you will need a much increased appropriation for the project to keep both irrigation development and the new powerplant going.

The Pacific Southwest's much more critical and immediate problem is a need for additional water. Thus, we must all turn to a search for water,

and to do this, every facet of the water supply must be examined, not merely in the Pacific Southwest and in the Columbia River Basin, but throughout the nation, and not merely in flowing rivers, but in the atmosphere, underground, and in the salty sea.

With the approval of Congress, the Bureau of Reclamation is undertaking a far-reaching program of practical research to determine if it is possible to tap the rivers in the sky by weather modification. The National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Science have, in recent months, brought out reports that this is physically possible, but operational practicality and economic feasibility are still unknown factors until our research is further along.

A sister agency in the Department of the Interior, the Office of Saline Water, is pushing the investigation of purification of brackish and sea water with all possible haste. Thus far, it appears that this source may yield domestic water within a reasonable cost range. There has been no breakthrough as yet to bring irrigation water from such sources down to a competitive cost, but exciting progress is being made. Any large-scale long-distance transport of surface waters into the Colorado will be expensive. I am far from convinced that desalting of sea water may not prove to be the most economical solution.

But just as the facts on these potential sources of supply must be known, so must the facts about available supplies of water from normal sources as well as the needs of various areas.

Only then will Congress be in a position to anticipate and forestall the gathering crisis in our water supply. And make no mistake--Congress will act. The forthright action this year on pollution control is indicative of the mood of Congress to take positive action to solve our water problems. It is far, far better that Congress have a full array of facts than to hope it will act wisely in a vacuum.

Thus, I would propose that Washington State and all of the Pacific Northwest consider these possibilities carefully in charting a future course:

1. Waste no time in securing the authorization of and undertaking the construction of known feasible projects to put as much of your water

to work as possible. The tight national budget situation will make actual physical progress slow. But authorization is half the battle, and even a small initial appropriation will permit work to get underway.

2. Speed up and raise the level of the planning process for potential projects which have been talked about for many years, but have not progressed beyond that stage. The Basin Account will open the door of financial feasibility for many projects which, while showing a favorable benefit-cost ratio, were not feasible without the financial support the Basin Account offers.

3. Cooperate fully in the extensive present efforts to obtain an inventory of potential future needs. Federal interagency comprehensive basin surveys are now underway for the Columbia-North Pacific region, including separate special studies for the Puget Sound and Willamette Basins. Individual states are also active in studies of their own. The Western States Water Council is concerned as well in this activity. Such an inventory is essential to a national survey, which I am certain will be undertaken very shortly, either by established fact-finding agencies of the Government, or by a National Water Commission, as the Congress may decide.

With these steps the Pacific Northwest will have its house in order in anticipation of the day in the next decade or so when there may be positive and specific efforts to tap the Columbia.

Export of water from one basin to another is nothing new, although the Columbia River Basin, thus far, has remained relatively free of such diversions. But as I have pointed out, you are a part of the United States, and it is not the American way to let one sector of the nation suffer while another prospers with renewable resources wasting to the sea. But I reiterate again that the Bureau of Reclamation will not be a party to any effort to divert Columbia River water unless and until all the facts are known and they clearly show a surplus of water here and a critical need elsewhere that cannot otherwise be met.

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