

Committee on Resources

Testimony

Subcommittee on Water and Power

Tuesday, March 4, 1997

1324 Longworth HOB, 2:00 P.M.

**STATEMENT OF PATRICIA J. BENEKE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - WATER AND SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES**

I am pleased to appear before the Subcommittee on Water and Power of the Committee on Resources to testify in support of the President's fiscal year 1998 budget for the Bureau of Reclamation, the Central Utah Project and the Water Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey. The proposed budgets for these 3 organizations total \$1.1 billion, which represents approximately 15% of the Department's total budget request.

The budget request for the Department of the Interior, including these water programs, reflects the Department's and the Administration's continued commitment to address natural resource issues by working in geographically-based partnerships that cross not only the jurisdictional boundaries within the Federal government, but also involve the States, Tribes, local communities, and affected stakeholders.

This approach is reflected in several major initiatives in the Department's FY 1998 budget, including actions to restore the Everglades in South Florida, to implement the President's Forest Plan in the Pacific Northwest and to restore California's Bay-Delta. The Geological Survey's Water Resources Division and the Bureau of Reclamation both play key roles in the Bay-Delta restoration effort, which I am about to discuss in more detail. Various divisions of the Geological Survey contribute to the Everglades and South Florida Bay restoration program, as well as implementation of the Forest Plan.

Eluid Martinez, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, and Robert Hirsch, the Chief of the Water Resources Division at the U.S. Geological Survey, are with me today and their testimony will address details of the FY 1998 budget requests for their organizations. This afternoon I would like to highlight only one or two key elements for each of those budgets and also discuss the request for the Central Utah Project, for which my office is responsible.

California Bay-Delta Restoration

The President's FY 1998 budget request contains the full \$143.3 million authorized last fall in the Bay-Delta Environmental Enhancement and Security Act. The historic 1994 Bay-Delta Accord recognized that a comprehensive package of actions is required to strike a fair balance among competing uses, restoring and protecting the Bay-Delta ecosystem while providing reliable water supply on which the State's long-term economic health depends. Under the Accord, CALFED - a consortium of the Federal and State agencies with management and regulatory responsibilities in the Bay-Delta - has been charged with finding a

balanced solution to the four main problems in the Bay-Delta: uncertain water supplies, aging levees, declining habitat and threatened water quality. Working with stakeholder groups, CALFED has begun the process of defining and analyzing options which can result in a comprehensive, long-term program.

Last fall, the Congress passed and the President signed the California Bay-Delta Environmental Enhancement and Water Security Act, which authorizes \$143.3 million a year for three years in additional Federal spending for Bay-Delta ecosystem restoration. The authorization became effective in November 1996 when California voters approved a \$995 million bond issue to cover State cost sharing for activities to restore the Bay-Delta and for other water resources activities in California. The President's budget proposes to place the \$143.3 million in a new account under the Bureau of Reclamation, but to transfer these funds to a number of participating agencies based on plans to be developed by CALFED with extensive stakeholder input. The Administration's proposed appropriation language requires the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with other Federal agencies, to approve those plans. These funds would be used to match non-Federal funding under the terms a cost-sharing agreement now being developed.

Bureau of Reclamation

Aside from the request for the Bay-Delta Restoration initiative, the budget request for the Bureau of Reclamation totals \$764 million, a decrease of \$12 million. The request includes adequate funding for operations, maintenance and rehabilitation, which continues to be a high priority for both the Commissioner and me. This includes \$96.1 million for the dam safety program. The request also includes funding for several key projects: Central Arizona Project, \$61 million; Colorado River Basin Salinity Control, \$25 million; Garrison Diversion Unit, \$23 million; Water Reclamation/Reuse projects, \$32 million; Central Valley Project, \$121 million; Columbia Basin Project and Columbia/Snake River Salmon Recovery, \$23 million.

As a final point on the Bureau of Reclamation, I would like to report that the Bureau continues its notable efforts to reinvent itself and to fully implement its new mission as a water resources manager. Reclamation's water management mission places a greater emphasis on water conservation, recycling, and reuse; developing partnerships with its customers, States, and Tribes; finding ways to bring various interests together to address everyone's needs; transferring title and operation of some facilities to local beneficiaries; and achieving a higher level of responsibility to the taxpayer. All these changes have one goal - to meet the increasing water demands of the West while protecting the environment and the public's investment. The process of implementing change requires persistence, adequate financial and human resources and a clear focus on the goal. The President's FY 1998 budget reflects the Administration's continued commitment to achieving that goal and acknowledges the successes which Reclamation has achieved to date as it evolves from a traditional civil works agency into a modern water resources management organization.

Central Utah Project Completion Act

Consistent with the Central Utah Project Completion Act, the Secretary has delegated to the Assistant Secretary responsibilities for completion of the project and funding of fish, wildlife and recreation mitigation and conservation. As a result, we established a program coordination office in Provo, Utah, with a Program Director to provide oversight, review and liaison with the Central Utah Water Conservancy District, the Utah Reclamation and Mitigation Commission, and the Ute Indian Tribe, and to assist in administering the responsibilities of the Secretary under the Act. Ron Johnston, the program coordinator, is here today to help answer your questions.

The FY 1998 request for the Central Utah Project Completion Account provides \$41.2 million for use by the District, the Commission and the Department to implement Titles II through IV of the Act, a decrease of \$2.5 million from FY 1997. The overall decrease reflects a completion in early 1998 of a major contract for construction of the Diamond Fork Pipeline, and the Administration's efforts to bring the Federal budget into balance by 2002.

The request includes \$21.2 million for the District to continue construction and implementation of the Wasatch County Water Efficiency Project, the Daniels Replacement Project, and other water conservation projects; to continue construction of the Diamond Fork and Spanish Fork Canyon/Nephi Irrigation Systems; and to continue implementation of groundwater recharge and conjunctive use programs. In addition, the FY 1998 request includes \$2.3 million to initiate construction activities on the replacement facilities for the Uintah and Upalco Units that serve Indian and non-Indian users in the Uinta Basin.

The request also provides \$11.6 million for use by the Mitigation Commission for mitigation and conservation projects authorized in Title III of the Act and to complete other environmental commitments identified in Reclamation planning documents. This amount is a decrease of \$0.1 million from the FY 1997 amount.

Water Resources Division - U.S. Geological Survey

Providing critical science needed to underpin resource management decisions is one of the Department's major responsibilities. With the consolidation of the former National Biological Service into USGS, the Survey is the Department's single science organization, tasked with delivering high quality, unbiased, sound science to support Interior's land and resource managers. Overall the request for the U.S. Geological Survey totals \$746 million, an increase of \$6.5 million over the FY 1997 appropriation.

The Water Resources Division is responsible for the continuous assessment of the quantity and quality of the nation's water. Its ability to collect, maintain, and assess water data and coordinate the water data activities of other Federal agencies makes it an important participant in the resolution of water resources issues throughout the nation and in the Department's efforts to restore the ecological and economic health of communities through intergovernmental, multidisciplinary approaches. The request for the Water Resources Division totals \$194 million, an increase of \$2 million over the FY 1997 appropriation. This includes funding for USGS's participation in the President's Kalamazoo Initiative, which would expand the National Water-Quality Assessment Program to include 75 of the largest metropolitan areas in the country (including one in each state) and would enable the USGS to rapidly prepare and disseminate data on the quality of the source waters for municipal drinking water supplies. In addition, for the first time in several years we have included a request to fund the Water Resources Research Institutes. Dr. Hirsch will provide you with additional detail on the programs of the Water Resources Division and the FY 1998 budget request.

This completes my statement today. Again, thank you for providing me the opportunity to discuss with this subcommittee the programs and FY 1998 requests for these three organizations and the Commissioner, Dr. Hirsch and I will be pleased to respond to your questions.

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