

Testimony of Ed Brookshier
City Manager
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Regarding H.R. 2741
Before the Subcommittee on Water & Power
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
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Chairwoman Napolitano and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this hearing and allowing me to testify in support of H.R. 2741. My name is Ed Brookshier and I am the City Manager for the City of Hermiston, Oregon. I wish to publicly thank Congressman Greg Walden for introducing this important piece of legislation that is crucial to the City's reclamation and reuse of its municipal wastewater. This reclamation effort will provide a high quality recycled water for reuse as a source of irrigation supply. The City's recycled water production is estimated to be 3,600 acre-feet annually, of which 1,800 Acre-feet will supply irrigation and 1,800 acre-feet will be discharged to the Umatilla River in winter. This new partial source of drought proof irrigation water will provide an added supply to the Bureau of Reclamation owned and locally operated West Extension Irrigation District.

Hermiston, Oregon is a progressive, growth-oriented urban center with a total trade area population of 320,900. Located in a relatively dry section of the state of Oregon, positioned between the Cascade Mountains to the west and the Blue Mountains to the East, Hermiston is placed in a unique geographical area that offers an extended growing season and a variety of agricultural crops and products. The immediate Hermiston area has been able to diversify its economy with food processing, cold storage and warehousing and distribution facilities.

The benefits of developing a high quality source of recycled water followed by its use as a source of irrigation are numerous and extend to: The West Extension Irrigation District, the City of Hermiston, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the region as a whole.

The West Extension Irrigation District benefits from this project by obtaining an additional source of supply, which is both high in quality and drought proof. Since water is delivered to the District, energy required for pumping is also reduced by approximately \$13,000 annually. In addition, the 1,800 acre-feet of irrigation water provided annually will supply water to 600 acres, reducing the demand on the District's surface water supply sources. Finally, this added source of partial irrigation water improves the District's operational flexibility.

The City of Hermiston benefits primarily through meeting its upcoming National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES). This permit requires the City to both develop a high-quality recycled water and remove its discharge from the Umatilla River continuously from April 1 to October 31 of each year. The West Extension Irrigation District provides the long term, multi-farm discharge option that allows the City to remove its discharge from the River during this period of each year. If the City is unable to discharge to the District it will be in continuous violation of current temperature standards and periodic violation of the ammonia standard contained within the City's NPDES Permit. Secondary benefits to the City include a reduction in energy cost from reduced pumping, estimated to be \$42,000 annually, and the certainty that this solution, though expensive, will provide service for decades to come.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will also benefit from development of high-quality recycled water throughout the year. These benefits include a significant improvement in the quality of recycled water discharged to the Umatilla River in winter; further protection of sensitive salmonid habitat during summer when the recycled water is used for irrigation in lieu of River discharge; increased environmental monitoring at the recycled water treatment facility and the long-term nature of this solution.

The region as a whole also benefits from treatment that develops high-quality recycled water. This water source is protective of the environment in both summer and winter and provides an added source of irrigation supply to agriculture, which is the backbone of the Hermiston economy. The Hermiston Water Recycling Project is estimated to be completed and online in 2 ½ years. This effort will have an immediate economic impact to our local economy as much needed jobs will be created through an infrastructure project of this size. More importantly, the addition of the new and reliable water source created by this project will have a profound long-term impact to the farming industry in our area which faces an uncertain future due to dwindling water supplies.

Madam Chairman, while I understand and appreciate the strict budgetary limitations that your Committee and Congress as a whole are faced with, I believe that the Hermiston Recycled Water facility is a worthwhile federal investment due to the numerous federal objectives that will be advanced through this project. Combined with the serious regulatory issues the City of Hermiston is faced with and the need for added drought proof sources of recycled water in the Hermiston Area for irrigation, it is essential that we complete construction of this project in a timely manner. Federal participation in this endeavor is vital to ensure that this becomes a reality.

This concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.