

Testimony and Statement of Richard Dieker
Manager, Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District
Before the U.S House of Representatives

Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
H.R 1564

The Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District Conveyance Act of 2005
September 27, 2005

Good morning, my name is Richard Dieker. I am the manager of the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District. I am here today on behalf of the Board of Directors and water users of the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District to provide background and information in support of H.R.1564, legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain lands and buildings of the Yakima Project in Washington to the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District. We strongly support this legislation and thank the committee for considering it today.

Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District

The District is located in Central Washington and is part of the Yakima Project. The District has a long history of involvement with the United States dating back to 1906 when construction began on project facilities. The delivery of irrigation water began in 1910. The District assumed operation and maintenance of delivery facilities in 1947 and were the first reclamation project to repay our construction indebtedness to the United States in that year. In 1988 after completion of a rehabilitation and betterment project, the District again repaid its obligations to the United States. The District delivers water to approximately 28,000 acres.

H.R. 1564, the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District Conveyance Act of 2005

The act would authorize the Secretary of Interior to convey title of federally owned lands and buildings to the Yakima-Tieton Irrigation District. The title would be conveyed to approximately nine acres of land, two houses and associated structures, the headquarters office building and a warehouse. The houses and property are used to accommodate district employees who maintain and inspect delivery facilities. The headquarters office building is the base of operation for the District.

Title Transfer Process

It has been the desire of the District to obtain title to buildings and lands outlined in the legislation and owned by the United States for many years. In 1995 when the Bureau of Reclamation policy framework for title transfer began the District began to investigate the process to complete title transfer. The Bureau and the District worked cooperatively and successfully to address all of the elements necessary to bring this legislation forward.

We then worked with Congressman Hastings to introduce the legislation.

Benefits of This Title Transfer

The title transfer will give the District more local control of buildings which were constructed for our use. There will be one less administrative layer caused by the United States ownership when changes or improvements of the property and buildings are needed. The Bureau of Reclamation will no longer need to complete periodic facility reviews of these transferred buildings and properties. They can direct personnel to more important activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank several people who have made have made this transfer possible. Within the Bureau of Reclamation I would like to thank Commissioner Keys for his support now and also when he was Regional Director in the Pacific Northwest Region. Next is Mike Relf of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office and Keith Angwin from the Upper Columbia Area Office who worked hard to make the process successful. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Congressman Hastings and his staff who worked closely with us and Reclamation to move this legislation forward.

In summary, H.R. 1564 is a good bill, a good title transfer and shows a cooperative process of benefit to both Reclamation and the District. I urge the Committee to move this legislation forward.

This concludes my testimony; I would be pleased to answer any questions.