

Statement of John W. Keys III
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of Interior
on H.R. 3561
before the
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
May 22, 2002

My name is John Keys and I am Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). I am pleased to provide the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 3561. This bill would establish the Twenty-First Century Water Policy Commission to study water management throughout the nation and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water policy. The Department supports efforts, as in H.R. 3561, to plan for our nation's future water needs. The American people would benefit from efforts to bring together qualified people to look at what information we have, analyze trends, and find out what's on the cutting edge of water use, reuse, and all aspects of water management. Reclamation and other Interior agencies bring both experience and expertise to support such an effort.

A tremendous amount of research on water needs and management already has been done. In addition, numerous federal, state, tribal, local and private organizations are trying to determine how best to meet their future water needs. At the Department of the Interior, Secretary Norton is currently in the process of analyzing how to meet water needs in the western states over the next 25 years.

What we need most is to have qualified people - including representatives of academia; science and technology; legal, environmental, and community organizations; state, tribal, Federal, and local governments - compile and analyze existing water use management data, examine population trends, identify existing technologies as well as research & development on advances in water-related technologies.

As the Subcommittee considers H.R. 3561, we encourage you to keep in mind the responsibilities that Congress (and the judiciary, in some cases) has placed on the Department of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior, for example, is the Water Master for the Colorado River. For the past century, Reclamation has played an integral role in the development of Federal water management policy.

Congress authorized early Reclamation water projects to help settle the arid lands of the American west, by providing water for irrigation. Over the course of this century of service, Reclamation has become the largest water resources management agency in the west, delivering 30 million acre-feet annually from 348 reservoirs. Reclamation projects supply water to more than 31 million people and one-third of irrigated agriculture in the western states. The Bureau's 58 power plants produce more than 42 billion kilowatt hours per year, making Reclamation the 2nd largest hydropower utility in the United States. Reclamation has a

presence in every major river basin in the west, and is responsible for implementing, as delegated by the Secretary of the Interior, interstate compacts and judicial decrees, international treaties, and interstate and interbasin projects.

Reclamation takes great pride in providing these water-related services to the public. The Bureau is constantly working, often in partnership with states and other non-Federal entities, to improve water management in order to meet ever-increasing demands for water from Reclamation projects. Reclamation works in an environment of cooperation with state, tribal, and local governments and other Federal agencies. Given the deference to state law in the allocation of water, membership on any commission should include several additional representatives from the states. Also, tribal representation should be assured.

As a long-time leader in water management and delivery in the West, Reclamation works with its contractors and customers, state, local, and tribal governments, as well as other federal agencies, to assess and meet future water needs; and with municipal and rural domestic water consumers to deliver clean drinking water. We are partnering with qualified entities on finding innovative and cost-effective ways to recover otherwise non-potable water in water-short areas of our country. Reclamation is committed to delivering water under our contracts, meeting applicable environmental laws, and abiding by state water laws in the process.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I will be glad to answer any questions.

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