

Statement of William E. Rinne  
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Before the  
House Resources Committee  
Subcommittee on Water and Power  
On H.R. 2563

To Conduct Feasibility Studies to Address Certain Water Shortages Within  
The Snake, Boise, and Payette River Systems in Idaho  
November 3, 2005

Good morning. I am William Rinne, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operations for the Bureau of Reclamation. I am pleased to be here today to provide the Administration's views on H.R. 2563, legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct feasibility studies to address water shortages within the Snake, Boise, and Payette River systems in Idaho. While the Administration cannot support H.R. 2563 in its current form, we welcome the opportunity to be an active partner in addressing future water supply issues in the State of Idaho.

The State of Idaho continues to experience the effects of a prolonged drought as well as tremendous growth and urbanization of rural areas in the Snake River basin, especially in the Boise and Payette River basins and in towns along the Snake River. The projected population growth will eventually over-extend existing water supplies for these rapidly growing areas.

In 2004, the Idaho State House of Representatives issued Joint Memorial No. 24 which "recognizes the need for additional water to meet Idaho's emerging needs and encourages Federal and State agencies to cooperate with Idaho in identifying and developing such water supply projects." While Reclamation generally supports focused, basin-by-basin study approaches, with input and local involvement from the State and the stakeholder communities, this legislation appears to be premature. Under existing authorities Reclamation has initiated an assessment level water supply study in the Boise and Payette basins. A stakeholders group with wide representation from the State, Federal, agricultural, environmental and municipal sectors has been participating in this study. We expect the assessment to be complete in June 2006.

While recognizing the need to address projected water supply shortages, the Administration cannot support the bill in its present form. The legislation does not contain any time nor funding limitations and it does not require at least 50% non-federal cost share for feasibility studies, as is required by Reclamation policy. The bill should include an authorization for sufficient funds to conduct any feasibility studies.

Reclamation will continue working with the Committee and with the people of Idaho to identify specific projects that could move forward to the position of being ready for feasibility investigations.

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