

Statement of William Rinne
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U.S. Department of the Interior

Before the House Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Water and Power

H.R. 5715

Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act Amendments

July 12, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Bill Rinne, Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. I am pleased to be here today to give the Department's views on H.R. 5715, to make amendments to the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992. Because of the tremendous backlog of existing Title XVI projects, and for other reasons described below, the Department cannot support H.R. 5715.

In 1992, Congress adopted, and the President signed, the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act (Public Law 102-575). Title XVI of this Act, the Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act, authorized the Secretary to participate in the planning, design and construction of five water reclamation and reuse projects. The Secretary was also authorized to undertake a program to identify other water recycling opportunities throughout the 17 western states, and to conduct appraisal level and feasibility level studies to determine if those opportunities are worthy of implementation. The Bureau of Reclamation has been administering a grant program to fund these Title XVI projects since 1994.

In 1996, Public Law 104-266, the Reclamation Recycling and Water Conservation Act, was enacted. This law amended Title XVI and authorized the Secretary to participate in the planning, design and construction of 18 additional projects, including two desalination research and development projects. Since 1996, Title XVI has been amended several times, and now there are 32 projects authorized for construction in nine states.

One of the additional projects authorized by the 1996 amendment is the North San Diego County Area Water Recycling Project, which is authorized by Section 1615. This project is the result of a cooperative effort by the San Elijo Joint Powers Authority, the Carlsbad Municipal Water District, the Olivenhain Municipal Water District, and the Leucadia Wastewater District. It consists of planning, designing, and constructing facilities to reclaim and reuse approximately 15,350 acre-feet of water annually in the North San Diego County area in order to reduce the region's dependence on imported water supplies and to reduce wastewater discharges to the ocean. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2008. Through Fiscal Year 2006, a total of \$17,063,000 has been appropriated for this project, leaving a balance of \$2,967,000 available within the appropriations ceiling of \$20 million.

H.R. 5715 intends to amend Section 1615 to specifically authorize funding of an additional project, Phase II of the Olivenhain Water Treatment Plant. This would include the addition of process improvements and expansion of the capacity from 34 to 45 million gallons per day. The treatment plant is a membrane ultrafiltration plant that is state of the art in many ways. While this plant is an example of using cutting edge technology to improve water quality and reduce costs, this plant is part of the local domestic water system that has no relation to the recycled water projects that are currently authorized by Section 1615.

Mr. Chairman, the Department supports efforts to increase local water supplies in southern California. The Olivenhain Municipal Water District is to be congratulated on the successful implementation of the Olivenhain Water Treatment Plant, and is to be commended for improving and expanding the plant. However, the Department does not believe it is proper to amend Title XVI to provide funding for a domestic water treatment facility with no relation to water recycling. This is not within the Title XVI program established and defined in Section 1602(a). Therefore, the Department cannot support H.R. 5715.

The Department also believes that this legislation would likely place an additional burden on the Reclamation's already tight budget. With the tremendous backlog of existing Title XVI projects, we cannot support the addition of new projects at this time. Furthermore, Reclamation strongly objects to the provision in this bill providing for a Federal cost share of up to \$35 million. The existing Title XVI statute limits the maximum Federal cost to the lesser of 25 percent of total project costs or \$20 million.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.R. 5715. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

