

**Statement of Robert Quint, Senior Advisor
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of the Interior
before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
United States Senate**

**S. 693 – City of Hermiston, Oregon, Water Recycling and Reuse Project
April 16, 2013**

Chairman Schatz and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Bob Quint, Senior Advisor at the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). I am pleased to provide the views of the Department of the Interior (Department) on S. 693, the City of Hermiston, Oregon, Water Recycling and Reuse Project. For reasons I will discuss below, the Department cannot support the bill.

S. 693 would amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act (Public Law 102-575, 43 U.S.C. 390h *et seq.*), commonly called Title XVI, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the design, planning, and construction of permanent facilities needed to reclaim and reuse water in the City of Hermiston, Oregon. The project is being implemented by the City of Hermiston.

The City of Hermiston (City), located in north central Oregon, is one of the largest communities within Reclamation's Umatilla Project area. The project proposed by the City includes upgrades and construction at their existing wastewater treatment facility and construction of a delivery system that would deliver recycled water to the West Extension Irrigation District. This recycled water would be used by the District to irrigate agricultural lands. By 2031, it is estimated that this proposed project would provide the District with approximately 2,000 to 3,000 acre-feet of drought resistant water supply during the irrigation season. The 2011 total estimated cost for this project was approximately \$25.8 million.

In January 2010, the City of Hermiston submitted their feasibility report to Reclamation for review under the Title XVI program. In April 2010, Reclamation's review team completed the review and made the certification that the proposed project "Meets Requirements" as defined under section 1604 of Public Law 102-575, as amended. In 2011, Reclamation completed the determination of financial capability and communicated the final approval to the City.

The City and Reclamation's Pacific Northwest Region have completed Reclamation specific actions that are necessary for implementation of the proposed project. This includes environmental compliance, issuance of a license to the City granting authorization to construct, own, operate, and maintain their facility on Reclamation fee title land, and issuance of a permit allowing this water to be discharged into Reclamation's West Main Canal.

S. 693 would authorize the City of Hermiston's project under Title XVI for Federal funding not to exceed 25 percent of the total cost of the project.

While the Department supports efforts to increase local water supplies and increase recycled water use, this project would compete for funds with other needs within the Reclamation program, including other Title XVI projects currently under construction. In general, the Department supports the Title XVI Reclamation and Reuse program. The 2014 budget request includes funding for the Department's WaterSMART Program, of which Title XVI is an important element, and the full 2014 request for WaterSMART is \$35.4 million.

As part of this total, the Department is requesting \$14 million to fund Title XVI projects selected through competitive funding opportunity processes which uses criteria finalized in 2010 to identify activities most closely aligned with Title XVI statutory and program goals. Reclamation plans to invite sponsors of Congressionally authorized Title XVI projects to submit applications for funding under the program and will review and rank proposals against those criteria to identify projects for funding, subject to appropriations in fiscal year 2014.

We recognize that water reuse is an essential tool in stretching the limited water supplies in the West, and I believe the FY 2014 budget request has demonstrated the emphasis placed by this Administration on this Program. However, given that there are 53 already authorized Title XVI projects and numerous competing mission priorities and demands on Reclamation's limited budget, the Department cannot support the authorization of new Title XVI projects or extensions of existing authorized cost ceilings at the current time. Federal budget realities, however, should not detract from the fact that the Hermiston Recycling and Reuse Project would prove valuable in Oregon's efforts to address current and future water resource challenges posed by drought and the competing demand for scarce water resources.

This concludes my written statement. I am pleased to answer any questions at the appropriate time.