



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY &  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL, *Ranking Member*

@EnergyDems

## **S. 1694, the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act of 2015** By Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

The Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act of 2015 authorizes an innovative, collaborative approach to water management that will enhance the sustainability and resilience of the Yakima River Basin to help ensure that sufficient water is available for agriculture, tribes, municipalities and the environment, especially during periods of drought.

Specifically, the bill authorizes the initial phase of a long-term integrated water resources plan for the basin that will lead to improved water supplies, improved environmental outcomes and more resilient water management in the face of climate change. Without this bill and the integrated plan, the basin is likely to face continued water shortages, conflict and litigation, as there is not enough water to meet current and potential future demands.

***Integrated Plan.*** This bill and the integrated plan address long-standing water supply challenges and environmental needs in the Yakima River Basin, by providing a more reliable and sustainable supply of water to meet agricultural, municipal, and environmental needs and by restoring the ecosystems and habitat of the Basin. This bill authorizes an integrated approach that includes improved water infrastructure, water conservation and ecosystem restoration, flow agreements and construction of permanent fish passage at two dams.

***Benefits.*** This bill provides a number of key benefits to the Yakima region's economy and environment:

- (1) **Provides drought relief and more certainty to the most productive agricultural region in the state**, which generates nearly \$3.2 billion in economic benefits each year.
- (2) **Enhances the environmental health of the river basin** by restoring significant ecological habitat and installing fish ladders on two dams. One of the major benefits of enactment would be the restoration of significant fish habitat, including chinook, coho, steelhead, bull trout and sockeye salmon runs. Efforts supported by the bill and the full integrated plan, would restore fish access to rivers that have been blocked for more than 100 years and could ultimately reestablish one of the largest sockeye salmon runs in the contiguous United States.
- (3) **Improves municipal, industrial and domestic water supplies throughout the basin.**

***Model for Other Basins.*** This plan is a model for watershed management in other basins across the country. This 21st century approach embodies collaborative, consensus-based decision-making at the local level; considers human and ecological needs at the watershed scale; and provides an adaptive framework for water management now and into the future.

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