



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.)

What S. 1694 does. The Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act of 2015 builds on existing water legislation in the Basin and authorizes the initial phase of a long-term water management plan that will provide drought relief and address long-standing water supply challenges in the Yakima Basin. Activities authorized by the bill include:

- Improvements in water infrastructure and management for agriculture, communities, and the environment;
- Increased water conservation and marketing; and
- Restoration of ecosystems and fisheries, including construction of permanent fish passage at two dams and restoration of basin tributaries.

Goals of the bill. This bill will dramatically enhance water resilience in the Basin by:

- Providing drought relief and more certainty for farmers and communities in one of the state of Washington's most productive agricultural regions;
- Improving municipal, industrial, and domestic water supplies; and
- Significantly enhancing the ecological health of the river. Fish passage projects will restore access to the headwaters of the Cle Elum River which have been blocked for more than 100 years and one of the largest sockeye salmon runs in the lower 48.

Why this bill is needed. Without this bill, the Basin is likely to face continued water shortages, conflict, and litigation, as there is not enough water to meet current and future demands.

- The federal government plays a significant role in the Basin, including mandates to manage infrastructure and streamflows in compliance with Reclamation law, tribal rights, endangered species, and other requirements. Authorization of federal participation in activities is required where there are legal, statutory or programmatic responsibilities.
- Failure to act could have severe economic and environmental impacts as the Basin faces continued drought and water challenges. Acting now could avoid more severe impacts and costs later.

Why this bill is a water management model for the nation. This bill and the Integrated Plan it implements are a model for 21st century watershed management, which:

- Consider human and ecological needs at the watershed scale;
- Embody collaborative, locally-driven decision-making,
- Provide an adaptive framework to support water resilience now and into the future, and
- Provide for innovative financing that balances federal trust responsibilities with state cost-shares and private financing through public-private partnerships.