



H.R. 495 - Oregon Water Resources Management Act of 2007

Floor Situation

H.R. 495 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR) on January 16, 2007. The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources but was not considered.

H.R. 495 is expected to be considered on the floor on July 23, 2007.

Summary

This legislation amends the Oregon Resource Conservation Act of 1996 to make a number of necessary changes. These changes are listed below:

- Replaces references to the Deschutes River Basin Working Group with the Deschutes River Conservancy Working Group (DRC);
- Requires the two representatives of private interests from irrigated agriculture on the Working Group to actively farm more than 100 acres of irrigated land and not be irrigation district managers;
- Directs the Bureau of Reclamation to pay up to a total amount of \$2 million for each year of FY2007-FY2016 for 50% of the cost of performing projects proposed by the Working Group and approved by the Secretary of the Interior ;
- Authorizes appropriations for Deschutes Basin ecosystem restoration projects for FY2007-FY2016.

Additionally this legislation allows the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with, tribal, state, and local governmental entities and the Associated Ditch Companies, Incorporated (ADC) to plan, design, and construct facilities needed to implement the Wallowa Lake Dam Rehabilitation Program and the Water for Irrigation, Streams and the Economy Project water management feasibility study and environmental impact.

Background

The DRC leased over 70 cubic feet per second of water in the basin's streams and rivers during the 2005 irrigation season and has restored over 100 miles of stream corridor using livestock management techniques, restored channel floodplain connectivity, and planted over 250,000 native plants and trees in the riparian zone.

The rehabilitation of the Wallowa Lake Dam, which has been identified by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers as a high hazard structure, is included in this legislation. Also included in the authorization is a water management feasibility study and environmental impact statement for the Water for Irrigation, Streams, and the Economy Project.

Additionally the legislation amends a repayment contract between the Department of the Interior and the North Unit Irrigation District (District) to meet State water conservation law and allow the District to improve its overall water management and efficiency. The bill increases the maximum irrigated land within the District available to receive Deschutes Project water from 50,000 acres to 59,000 acres, and reclassifies that land. This will allow a quicker repayment of the loan.

Cost

At the time of publication, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not yet scored this legislation.

Staff Contact

For questions or further information contact Luke Hatzis at (202) 226-2302.