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# Colorado River Basin Study Comments--Grand Coulee Project Hydroelectric Authority

Merle R. Gibbens

Grand Coulee Project Hydroelectric Authority

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Electricity From Irrigation Water

# GRAND COULEE PROJECT HYDROELECTRIC AUTHORITY

32 "C" Street NW, Room 305

P.O. Box 219, Ephrata, WA 98823-0219  
509/754-2227 Fax: 509/754-2425

April 10, 1997

<b>WWPRAC</b>		
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DATE	INITIALS	CODE

Mr. Donald R. Glaser  
Executive Director  
Western Water Policy Review  
P.O. Box 25007  
Denver Federal Center  
Denver, Colorado 80225

Re: Columbia River Basin Report  
Contractor - John M. Volkman

Dear Mr. Glaser:

The following comments on the draft Columbia River basin report entitled "**A RIVER IN COMMON: THE COLUMBIA RIVER, THE SALMON ECOSYSTEM, AND WATER POLICY**" are being forwarded as requested:

1. In Section III.C.5., regarding text information with footnote #177 reference (*U.S. General Accounting Office, Bureau of Reclamation: Information and Repayment of Costs of constructing Water Projects*)

Since Mr. Volkman's report is on the Columbia River basin, the use of Bureau wide data is misleading. From information source cited above, the federal investment in water projects in the Pacific Northwest Region of the Bureau of Reclamation is \$2.9 billion and 86 percent is reimbursable.

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The following table shows allocation of Bureau construction costs by regions, as of September 30, 1994. (dollars in billions)

Region	Total Reimbursable Costs	Total Project Costs	Percent Reimbursable
Great Plains	\$ 4.6	\$ 5.6	82
Lower Colorado	2.9	4.7	62
Mid Pacific	3.4	4.2	81
Pacific Northwest	2.5	2.9	86
Upper Colorado	3.5	4.4	80
Total	\$16.9	\$21.8	78

Any federal program which is 78 percent reimbursable on average is outstanding. The public should be thankful instead of critical of the many benefits provided by federal multipurpose reclamation projects.

In Section V.A.1., regarding text information on **Background on Water Diversions**; second paragraph.

Please have Mr. Volkman provide basis or support facts for following statements:

*'Water divisions are free'* - This is certainly not the case for 90+ irrigation districts within the State of Washington.

*'Irrigation pumpers pay lower power rates'* - Electrical utility incentives were available for all consumer in the Northwest to electrify in the 1950s, 1960s & 1970s. The utilities had enormous capacity for summer load and made conversions to hydroelectric energy sources very attractive. The summer-rate differential in today's competitive market is nil.

*'State water law traditionally encouraged users to take as much water out of streams as they could.'* - Do to the use it or lose it statutory provisions, a water right holder will preserve ~~certificated quantities~~ established by administering state agency. Said quantities are normally based upon typical seasonal crop consumptive use requirements.

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*'As one environmental advocate has observed: As long as the cost of water is less than the value of the crops it can grow, the rational irrigator will want more water.'* - Request basis and/or data from source noted to support statement. Within the Columbia Basin Project, annual per acre diversions are declining.

4. Overall, Mr. Volkman prepared a very descriptive report addressing the critical water problems, fish and wildlife issues, and watershed initiative programs being conducted within the basin.

Again, I thank you for opportunity to forward above comments.

Sincerely,



Merle R. Gibbens  
Secretary-Manager

cc: John Volkman, 323 Middle Crest Road, Lake Oswego, Oregon 97401  
Dick Erickson, Manager, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District  
Keith Franklin, Manager, Quincy-Columbia Basin Irrigation District  
Shannon McDaniel, Manager, South Columbia Basin Irrigation District  
Tom Myrum, Executive Director, Washington State Water Resources Association