



Washington State Senate

Senator Chris Marr
6th Legislative District

Olympia Office:
417 Legislative Building
PO Box 40406
Olympia, WA 98504-0406
Phone: (360) 786-7610
FAX: (360) 786-1999
E-mail: marr.chris@leg.wa.gov

Spokane Office:
827 W. First Ave., Suite 318
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone: (509) 456-2450
FAX: (509) 456-2452
Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

October 21, 2009

Governor Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Polly Zehm, Acting Director
WA State Dept. of Ecology
P.O. Box 47600
Olympia, Wa 98504-7600

Dear Gov.  Gregoire and Acting Director Zehm:

I am writing to request your support for the immediate implementation of the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association (CSRIA) Water Conservation Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Program.

I participated in a water conservation field tour this past summer in the Tri-Cities area and was able to personally view various O&M water conservation measures such as: Irrigation Scheduling, Moisture & Soil Monitoring, and Weather & Crop Monitoring. I was impressed by CSRIA's proactive approach to promoting and implementing water conservation.

According to Conservation District water managers that participated on the field tour, the CSRIA O&M Water Conservation Program would reduce real-time water withdrawals by about 17%.

In addition, the O&M Water Conservation Program would have the following positive benefits if immediately implemented by the Department of Ecology:

- Half (8.5%) of the 17% water savings would be put toward new or additional irrigated agriculture water uses while the other half (8.5%) of the water savings would be left in the river to help instream flows.
- It would immediately help our rural economy in Washington State.
 - No State Funding would be needed or required.
 - Water conserved through the O&M Water Conservation proposal would allow for 20,000-30,000 new acres of irrigated agriculture in 2-3 years.
 - It would create an additional annual income of \$70-100 million for the state.
- It would help to avoid new conflicts over Columbia-Snake River Water Management and would provide some relief to the current system of Water Right Changes/Transfers which is not enough to deal with the overall increased demand for water.
- It would ensure that the water conservation provisions of the 2006 Columbia River Water Management Program work and are used for the immediate development of new irrigated agriculture acres, while contributing to instream flows and allowing program funds to be used for other instream environmental benefits.

Committees: Transportation, Vice Chair • Health & Long-Term Care • Human Services & Corrections
• Water, Energy & Telecommunications

- It would not negatively affect other water rights, existing junior water right holders, or existing state in-stream flow rules.
- Water transfers would only be seasonal.
- It would be implemented within the CSRIA Voluntary Regional Agreement (VRA) with the Department of Ecology.
- It would be applicable to Columbia-Snake System Mainstem and the Odessa Sub-Area and would offer near term tangible relief for critical water supply needs for large portions of the Odessa Sub-Area.

From a technical-legal management perspective, the Conservation O&M Program avoids impairment-relinquishment and other technical issues, and deals equitably with shared water savings for both out-of-stream and in-stream demands. From a broader welfare view, the Irrigators' ability to fund their own program and produce new household income, especially during a recession, is exactly the type of activity we should be promoting.

The Irrigators speak highly of immediately implementing this program through existing RCW 90.90 and the CSRIA-Ecology VRA. They view the passage of the 2006 Columbia River Bill, and in-depth consultations with the Director of the Office of the Columbia River, as pointing the way toward proceeding ahead.

Finally, I must stress that water conservation implementation under RCW 90.90 to secure new irrigation needs must not be delayed further. CSRIA has been a catalyst with state policy makers to put water conservation and management practices ahead of more expensive water storage options.

As a result, I call for your enthusiastic support of the CSRIA Water Conservation O&M Program, and request that you will direct your agency staff to work with the Irrigators to initiate and implement it in 2010.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Marr", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Chris Marr

cc: Sen. Lisa Brown
Sen. Phil Rockefeller
Sen. Brian Hatfield