

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife**

Legislative Hearing

June 16, 2022

The Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record on H.R. 7793, the Rio Grande Water Security Act.

H.R. 7793, Rio Grande Water Security Act

Title I of H.R. 7793 establishes a federal working group to develop and implement an integrated water resources management plan for the Rio Grande Basin.

Reclamation has seen success with a similar program in the Yakima River Basin in Washington. The Yakima Integrated Plan identifies a comprehensive and balanced approach to water resources and ecosystem restoration improvements in the Yakima River Basin. Reclamation along with stakeholders in the Yakima River Basin, analyzed the Integrated Plan as part of the Yakima River Basin Study conducted in 2011.

Reclamation is preparing to initiate a Rio Grande Basin Study under the WaterSMART program. The Basin Study will: (1) evaluate water supply and demand in the Rio Grande Basin from the Colorado New Mexico border downstream to Elephant Butte Dam, and (2) identify strategies to address imbalances. This study will be important for the Rio Grande basin because the water supply within the Basin Study Area is limited, highly variable, and fully allocated. Commitments in the form of treaties, compacts, water rights, permits, and legal statutes are numerous, complex, and constrain water management flexibility.

Reclamation supports the intent of Title I but has concerns with the duration of this proposed legislation. Reclamation estimates that completing the Basin Study will be a 3-year process. The study will be an important step prior to developing and implementing an integrated plan. Implementation of an Integrated Plan would also be contingent on resolution of ongoing litigation in the *Texas vs. New Mexico* Supreme Court case.

Under Section 9106 of P.L. 111-11, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Congress authorized \$4 million to conduct a study of the irrigation infrastructure within the 18 Rio Grande Pueblos, and \$6 million in each of ten subsequent years to address identified infrastructure improvements. Detailed physical surveys of the existing irrigation infrastructure at each Pueblo were completed in the past ten years as program funding became available. The study has preliminarily identified that there are numerous irrigation improvements needed on Pueblo lands.

Reclamation supports an extension of the Rio Grande Pueblo authorization and looks forward to working with the sponsor and the Committee on this goal.