



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

NOV 15 2023

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Chairman
House Natural Resources Subcommittee
on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bentz:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to the questions for the record submitted to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Michael Brain following his appearance at the June 14, 2023, legislative hearing before your subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
House Natural Resources Committee
Legislative Hearing
June 14, 2023

Questions from Rep. Boebert

Question 1: Deputy Commissioner Brain, you testified that this bill provides “additional flexibility for Reclamation’s water users and contract holders.” Can you go into more detail on that?

Response: Section 4011 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act (P.L. 114-322) allowed Reclamation water users and contract holders to convert water service contracts into repayment contracts. The conversion allows for accelerated repayment of construction obligations owed to Reclamation for facilities repayment. As Section 4011 is a voluntary process, it gives contract holders an additional option to address their long-term needs. Further, under Section 4011, once contractors fully repay their construction obligation, they are no longer subject to the acreage limitation requirements of the Reclamation Reform Act. This would allow for use of Reclamation irrigation water on farming operations greater than 960 acres.

Question 2: Deputy Commissioner Brain, you testified that the Bureau of Reclamation worked with 86 contractors that requested consideration for contract prepayment when this was previously authorized.

Can you further discuss the successes of the program and how the dollars collected from prepayment are being used?

Response: As noted, Reclamation entered into agreements with 86 contractors that requested conversion of their water service contracts into repayment contracts under Section 4011(a) of the WIIN Act. Under Section 4011, the funding from these payments has been deposited in a Reclamation Water Storage Account to fund construction of water storage projects.