



*Meeting Tomorrow's Challenge*

President – Tom Myrum  
1st Vice President – Dave Koland  
2nd Vice President – Ron Thompson  
Treasurer – Wayne Cunningham  
Executive Vice President – Robert Johnson

March 10, 2014

The Honorable Scott Tipton  
218 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Tipton,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the members of the National Water Resources Association (NWRA), I write in support of H.R. 3189, the Water Rights Protection Act. The NWRA is a nonprofit federation made up of agricultural and municipal water providers, state associations, and individuals dedicated to the conservation, enhancement and efficient management of our nation's most important natural resource, water. Our members provide clean water to millions of individuals, families, agricultural producers and other businesses throughout the western United States.

Collectively, NWRA members have spent billions of dollars investing in the development of state issued water rights and the associated infrastructure in order to provide a safe and reliable water supply to their customers. Their ability to continue meeting the nation's growing demand for clean water is dependent upon access to this vital resource. The Water Rights Protection Act would protect NWRA members' water rights and those who depend on the water they deliver by preventing federal agencies from making a permit, permit renewal or other action conditional upon surrendering a water right. The protection of water rights is of the utmost importance to our members. Water rights constitute a valuable property right and as such are valuable assets that are often irreplaceable.

For more than eighty years NWRA members have helped finance, maintain and manage some of the most valuable and iconic water systems in the world and have turned virtual deserts into some of the most productive agricultural land on the planet. To accomplish this irrigators have worked collaboratively with federal agency partners at the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers. That collaborative partnership, formed through contracts and other agreements, is protected by this bill. Our members are gravely concerned by recent efforts by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that have made agency actions contingent upon the relinquishment or modification of a water right. These efforts go counter to the principle foundations of western water law, fly in the face of state law and set a dangerous precedent. Our members count on federal infrastructure to deliver both project and non-project water. Non-project water is privately owned; it has not been appropriated, acquired by, or apportioned to, the United States. In addition, many of our members deliver water through facilities that cross USFS or BLM land. The creation of a process through which water deliveries could be made contingent on the modification, relinquishment or surrender of a water right is unacceptable. Moreover, allowing such a

precedent would cause this assault on state water rights to spread in various forms to other agencies within the Agriculture and Interior Departments. Congress, needs to provide the respective Secretaries with clear guidance on this subject, H.R. 3189 provides this guidance.

The USFS and BLM efforts to curtail water rights have been focused on western states, but the implementation of this kind of policy would have ramifications throughout the nation. According to the United States Geological Survey, nearly seventy five percent of the irrigated agriculture in the U.S. is found in the seventeen western states. These states on average receive less than twenty inches of rain each year, making the reliable delivery of irrigation water vital. In order to protect our members' water rights, assure the continued delivery of clean water to millions of people and protect the integrity of western water law the NWRA supports the Water Rights Protection Act.

On behalf of NWRA's members I thank you for your attention to the critical water supply issues facing our nation, and for supporting our members as they continue to be stewards of our nation's water supply and a critical part of the economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert W. Johnson  
Executive Vice President  
National Water Resources Association  
4 E Street SE  
Washington, DC 20003

Cc:

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Chairman  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources