



# NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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## **SECRETARY NORTON PRAISES PRESIDENT'S CHOICE FOR BUREAU OF RECLAMATION COMMISSIONER**

(WASHINGTON) -- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today praised President Bush's intention to nominate John W. Keys, III as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). Currently a commercial airplane pilot, Keys is a USBR veteran and former director of the Bureau's Pacific Northwest region.

"John Keys knows the Bureau of Reclamation inside and out and appreciates its challenges and opportunities," Secretary Norton said. "In addition to 34 years of experience with the agency, John will bring a reputation of integrity and outstanding expertise in developing coalitions and consensus in resolving water challenges."

As Pacific Northwest regional director from 1986-1998, Keys managed 24 irrigation projects, 61 major dams, 11 hydroelectric plants and other facilities in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and portions of Montana and Wyoming. He developed coalitions that improved management of the Columbia River Basin, working closely with the Idaho Legislature, irrigation districts, and other federal agencies to meet Endangered Species Act water requirements for salmon in the Columbia River system, Bull trout in Idaho, snails in the Snake River and others. Likewise, he helped to work out solutions among Yakima River Basin water interests including fisheries, tribes, and farmers. In receiving Interior's highest honor – The Distinguished Service Award – in 1995, Keys was commended for maintaining open lines of communication and keeping interest groups focused on solutions.

Keys began with USBR as a civil and hydraulic engineer in Utah, North Dakota, Montana and Colorado from 1964 to 1989. He served as Chief of the Colorado River Water Quality Office in Denver from 1976-1979 and worked in Washington, D.C. as Assistant to the Regional Director during 1979-80. A graduate of Sheffield High School in Sheffield, Alabama, Keys received a B.S. from Georgia Tech in 1964 and an M.S. in Civil Engineering from Brigham Young University in 1971.

Keys is a commercial airplane pilot who owns a Cessna 182, averaging about 300 volunteer hours a year for Angel Flight, Air LifeLine, and County Search and Rescue. He also has been a college football referee since 1970 and a high school referee since 1962. His wife, Dell A. Keys, is a family practicing physician with Airman Medical Examiner and flies a Cessna 172. Together they volunteer one day a week at Arches National Park. Keys enjoys river rafting every summer and has enjoyed running the Colorado River and most other western rivers.