

**ICOLD Conference**

Good morning,

My name is Michael Connor and I am the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. On behalf of President Obama, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, and the men and women of the Bureau of Reclamation, I send you greetings from Washington, DC. I know you will enjoy your time in the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

I am humbled President Obama nominated me to be the Deputy Secretary of the Interior. I very much look forward to working with Secretary Jewell, who is an energetic leader and has a strong vision for the future. Until I am confirmed by the Senate, however, I am the on the job as Reclamation Commissioner.

The Pacific Northwest is the perfect location to host a conference on large dams. The Columbia River is home to some of the largest dams in the United States, including one of the largest concrete structures in the world, Grand Coulee Dam, which is just a few hours from your conference location.

Reclamation has a long tradition of working with ICOLD since its inception in 1928. Bringing large dam owners together from around the world to share information on dam safety, security, operations and maintenance can only lead to more consistent standards and safer and more reliable dams.

Reclamation has been building dams and water projects for the last 111 years.

We now manage 476 dams, own and operate 53 power plants that produce, on average, 40-billion kilowatt-hours per year, enough power for more than 3-and-a-half million people.

ICOLD was formed in 1928 – the same year that Reclamation began building large dams throughout the American West.

Hoover, Grand Coulee, Shasta, Folsom and Glen Canyon dams were all developed during this time, dams some of you will see following the conference during the study tours that are planned.

These dams have had a large impact on the development of the western United States, providing hydropower and consistency in water delivery that has allowed the communities near them to grow and be vital to the economies of the United States and the world.

Today, these investments are having a big impact on the economy of the United States. In a recent economic report released by the Department of the Interior, it found Reclamation contributed \$51.7 billion to the United States economy in 2012 and supported more than 360,000 jobs.

But following the big dam era, we began to learn of the impacts these dams have had on the environment and ecosystems and started working on doing a better

job of integrating their operations to not only support water and power development, but ensure healthy ecosystems.

We are starting to see success in this area.

In the Pacific Northwest, the wild salmon and steelhead are returning to spawn in the Columbia River Basin streams and rivers. Updated data show most populations that spawn in the interior Columbia River Basin have increased in abundance since the first Endangered Species listings of the 1990s.

We are also experiencing challenges due to a changing climate. Perhaps nowhere is that more evident than in the Colorado River Basin in the southwestern United States.

Last winter, we released a major study that looked at the water supply and demand throughout the entire Colorado River Basin over the next 50 years.

The report projected an average supply and demand imbalance by the year 2060 of more than 3.2 million acre-feet on average.

The largest increase in demand is due to the need to support a growing population in the basin. Population is expected to grow from its present level of about 40 million to approximately 76.5 million people by the year 2060.

The only way to solve this challenge is by working collaboratively with all the parties in the Colorado River basin. Working together, our goal is to meet the water supply and demands in the years to come.

The report included a range of proposed strategies from stakeholders to mitigate the projected imbalance. We have already identified the next steps with our partners and are working expeditiously to close the gap.

Finally, like all of you, we are facing the challenge of aging infrastructure within the Bureau of Reclamation. Many of our facilities are more than 60 years old.

Reclamation is actively maintaining and improving its infrastructure to ensure system reliability, safety and to conserve water.

We will continue our efforts to ensure our facilities will reliably deliver water and generate power for the foreseeable future.

Thank you again for your time and I hope you have a great conference.