

Commissioner Connor: Mission and Priorities

Hi. This is Commissioner Mike Connor. I'm standing here in Washington, D.C. I wanted to continue the video podcasts that we've been doing to describe some of the issues that I've been dealing with in D.C. Today I want to talk a little bit about our priorities at the Bureau of Reclamation as I see them.

While our mission has evolved, many of the priorities remain the same. And when I'm talking to various groups, whether it be members of Congress or doing speeches generally, I generally put our priorities in five categories.

The first is our infrastructure. It's proved to be immensely valuable to the west over time. The department is valued that the water energy and recreational services that we provide are valued at about \$19.6 billion per year. That supports about \$55 billion in economic activity per year and supports 416,000 jobs on an annual basis. It's very important that we continue to take care of that infrastructure and invest in it with our partners.

Secondary is Water Smart. It's our program to expand the supply of water in the west and to meet our future challenges and to avoid conflicts where we can. We've got a high priority goal for ourselves that we've set. Through 2011 we've saved about 488,000 acre-feet of water that we've facilitated the creation of. Through 2013 our goal is 730,000 acre-feet. Water smart is a very effective program to try and stretch that water supply through a deal with challenges such as climate change. It's going to remain a high priority for quite a while.

A third area is ecosystem restoration. We've had quite a discussion over time about whether this is part of our core mission or not. It is. It's critical if we're going to continue to supply water and power with the reliability that we've historically had. So we're going to continue to invest in ecosystem restoration.

A fourth area is strengthening tribal nations. We have a very active program. With implementing Indian water right settlements, this is going to be, for the next 20 years, a big part of our responsibilities. I anticipate that we'll be investing about \$150 to \$200 million per year to implement the settlements that are now our responsibility.

A fifth and final area that we have is renewable energy. We've done a great job in trying to facilitate increasing the amount of renewable energy through our hydropower program, as well as bringing online non-hydro renewable energy sources. And so we're going to continue to build upon those efforts. So renewable energy is a major priority for us. We want to continue Reclamation's history in that area. So thank you very much and I look forward to talking to you in future podcasts.

