Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 7, 2016

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House Conferees:

As you work to develop final comprehensive energy legislation, we respectfully request that you include language adopted as part of S. 2012, the *North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2016*, to authorize the next critical phase of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resources Management Plan. The future economic health of Central Washington is dependent upon improving our water infrastructure and supply to support growing communities as well as agricultural, conservation, and commercial needs – this is of the utmost importance to our constituents and regional economy.

The Yakima River Basin is one of the leading agricultural regions in Washington State and throughout the country, a large portion of which is world class, high-value fruit orchards, vineyards, and hop plantings. The orchardists, wine grape and hop growers, and other members of the agricultural community inject approximately $3.2 billion into Washington's economy and support countless jobs in the area. However, the demand for water in the region often exceeds the resources available, especially during times of drought, which have hit the state especially hard the past few years. As a result, water use has been severely restricted, with current water supply and infrastructure unable to meet existing human and environmental needs.

With researchers predicting that drought seasons will only become more common and get worse as snowpack in the mountains continues to decline, action needs to be taken so that stakeholders in the Yakima River Basin can continue operating without having to worry about whether or not they will be able to water their crops or support key commercial and municipal activities. As the nation has witnessed extreme water problems in California, we must be proactive and have a viable plan in place should intense drought persist in Washington State. The Yakima River Basin Integrated Plan offers a solution that will give water users more certainty, while also recognizing the concerns of conservationists and the various stakeholders in the Yakima River Basin.

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The Yakima River Basin Integrated Plan was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders from the region, including farmers and ranchers; irrigation districts; county and city governments; tribes; conservation organizations; and state and federal agencies. The Plan will protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife habitat; provide increased operational flexibility to manage instream flows to meet ecological objectives; and improve the reliability of the water supply in the Yakima River Basin for irrigation, municipal supply, and domestic uses. These objectives are met through the *Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act* (H.R. 4686 and S. 1694), which was unanimously passed by the Senate and subsequently included in S. 2012.

From farming and ranching, to manufacturing and municipal uses, to recreation and wildfire response, a reliable supply of water is an indispensable resource in the West. This plan is a balanced approach which provides greater water supply reliability for farmers and communities, and implements water marketing and banking so that in the future water is more easily delivered when and where it is needed. After years of negotiations and planning, the Integrated Plan offers a solution that will give water users more certainty, while also improving ecological integrity, creating jobs, and strengthening the Yakima River Basin economy for generations to come.

Therefore, we respectfully request that language of the *Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act* is retained as you work to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of comprehensive energy legislation. In our view, it is imperative that the water needs of the Yakima River Basin be resolved before it is too late. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Dave Reichert
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

cc:
Chairman Mike Conaway
Chairman Lamar Smith
Rep. Joe Barton
Rep. Ed Whitfield
Rep. John Shimkus
Rep. Bob Latta
Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Rep. Pete Olson
Rep. David McKinley
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