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October 29, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have approved H.R. 15736, the Reclamation Development Act of 1974.

This bill contains many desirable and needed reclamation program authorizations. For example, it will transfer the town of Page, Arizona -- currently owned by the Federal Government -- to non-Federal interests, thereby permitting it to function as a viable community with most residential and commercial property in private ownership. The bill will also provide for inclusion of additional hydroelectric power facilities in an existing major Colorado project.

On the other hand, H.R. 15736 contains some features which represent undesirable departures from established Federal water resource policies. In particular, several authorizations would impose on the Federal Government costs that properly should be borne by State and local interests. In addition, there are unresolved questions regarding the environmental impacts of several projects.

On balance, I have concluded that the desirable features of H.R. 15736 outweigh the undesirable ones. However, I have directed the executive agencies concerned, as part of the post-authorization review process, to carefully examine those program authorizations which depart from established policies or involve unresolved environmental problems.

On the basis of this review, I will determine whether corrective legislation is necessary, or whether funding for questionable projects should be requested.

At the same time, in order to achieve a reduction in Federal spending, I urge the Congress to approve my request for recession and deferral of funds already approved by Congress for certain reclamation projects to make certain we stay within the \$300 billion budget for fiscal 1975.

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