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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have today approved S. 151, "The Reclamation Authorization Act of 1975."

S. 151 authorizes four separate projects to be undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation: Polecat Bench, Wyoming; Dickinson Dam, North Dakota; McKay Dam and Reservoir, Oregon; and Pollock-Herreid unit, South Dakota.

The bill reauthorizes the Polecat Bench project to provide water for irrigation of 19,200 acres of land, a municipal and industrial water supply, and water for conservation and recreation purposes.

The Pollock-Herreid project, South Dakota, is based on a plan to divert water by pumping from the existing Lake Oahe on the Missouri River. The principal purposes of the project are to supply on-farm sprinkler irrigation for 15,000 acres of land and to supply municipal and industrial water to two communities.

The Dickinson Dam project, North Dakota, consists of certain modifications to be made to the Dickinson Dam to make additional municipal and industrial water available to the city of Dickinson, North Dakota, and to increase the existing spillway capacity to provide additional safety allowances in light of increased estimates of possible maximum flows.

The McKay Dam project, Oregon, is similar to the Dickinson Dam project in that it provides for increasing the capacity of the spillway of the dam for safety purposes. S. 151 also reauthorizes the project for additional purposes, including flood control, fish and wildlife, and recreation, as well as the existing irrigation function.

Although I have signed S. 151, it should be noted that I have several reservations about the bill and my implementation of its provisions will be subject to the following constraints:

First, the Polecat Bench project previously failed the test of cost-effectiveness, a test which is applied to other water resource projects generally. This project needs to be re-examined in light of new economic factors to see if it is economically justified. Similarly, the Executive Branch has not completed its study of the Pollock-Herreid unit and submitted a report on its feasibility to the Congress. Until such reports are prepared, there is no adequate basis for appraising the merits of these projects. Accordingly, I will not seek funds for either project until a cost-effectiveness study has been completed and the project is demonstrated to be economically justified.

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Second, the bill requires work on the latter two projects -- McKay Dam and Dickinson Dam -- solely at Federal expense. Safety is normally an integral design and operation feature of a federally constructed dam, to be paid for by project beneficiaries.

I do not endorse any policy which requires the Federal Government to pay the entire cost of work to improve dam safety in all situations involving modifications to federally built dams. The general question of Federal policy on the safety of dams will be considered when a congressionally directed report on that subject now underway by the Department of the Army is completed, and when new cost-sharing recommendations for water projects are made later this year.

Therefore, I will not seek any funds for these two projects until the study has been completed and the Executive Branch has made its recommendations on cost-sharing for water projects.

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