



FRANKLIN COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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KEITH JOHNSON
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Franklin County fully supports the Congressionally Directed Funding request submitted by the Columbia Basin Development League for a federal investment of \$2,000,000 in the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program (OGWRP), a rescue effort to preserve ground water resources for rural domestic and municipal uses within the federally owned Columbia Basin Project while maintaining the irrigated agricultural economy of an entire region. Up to 87,000 acres of highly productive irrigated land--that drives thousands of jobs in the region--would be transferred from a depleting aquifer to a sustainable source of surface water upon completion of OGWRP.

A series of pumping plant and pipeline systems are being built along East Low Canal to serve land now irrigated from deep wells. The first system to be constructed at East Low (EL) Canal mile 47.5 began operating this irrigation season. Three more systems are in the design phase, and additional systems await design. Funds requested would be directed to the design process and align with implementation of Reclamation's preferred alternative for the program. System designs at the 30% completion level are required to provide landowners with the information necessary to determine participation. This request also includes funds to automate East Low Canal gravity-delivery head gates to adjust for fluctuations resulting from conveyance of new pump plant diversions, reduce waste and labor, and result in water conservation and safe operations.

Retaining this land in irrigated agriculture benefits dozens of rural communities by maintaining the local tax base that supports schools and other community services. It also preserves the sole domestic water supply the rural communities in the area rely upon. This effort continues phased development of the Congressionally-authorized Columbia Basin Project, which today, is responsible for over \$5 billion in annual, cumulative economic activity. The CBP is only partially complete and was designed to serve hundreds of thousands of additional acres of irrigated farmland that feeds the world and is the economic engine that powers central Washington, significantly contributing to our state and federal economies.

Sincerely,

Clint Didier, Chair

Rocky Mullen, Pro Tem

Brad Peck, Member