

## **IRRIGATION DISTRICTS: Federal and State Agency Relationships**

Whose water is this and how is irrigation district access to and use of water regulated?

Irrigation districts (ID's) deal with 3 government entities: the Federal Bureau of Reclamation, Washington State Department of Ecology, the State Auditor's Office.

- **Reclamation** says how much water an ID can get, based on acreage, use and supply.
- **Ecology** issues water rights and permits, and does water use planning, (with BoR).
- The **Auditor's** office checks on "accountability, integrity and openness in governance and financial statements"

### **The Bureau of Reclamation [www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov)**

"Reclamation" was the term used to provide water to arid western land, to "reclaim" it for human use. Western expansion of the United States put enormous pressure on Federal government to invest in, build and regulate water projects concerning access, storage and use.

In 1902, the US Reclamation Service was established. President Roosevelt's idea of "conservation" was sustained exploitation of natural resources for the public good.

Reclamation Act (1902):

"Nothing in this Act shall be construed as affecting or intended to affect or in any way interfere with the laws of any State or Territory relating to the control, appropriation, use or distribution of water ... "

Many ill-planned, ill-financed and ill-fated projects ensued.

In 1923 the Bureau of Reclamation (BoR) was created with better procedures!

"Mission of the BoR is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public."

#1 priority - deliver water, considering the available supply

10 million agricultural acres of the West is irrigated by BoR (1/3 of total)

1/3 of people in the West use BoR water

In the Pacific NW, BoR works with 175 ID's. BoR works with 7 ID's in the Yakima Project.

ID's contract with BoR for water based on acreage and availability and use.

**Washington State Department of Ecology [www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov)**

"The waters of Washington State collectively belong to the public and cannot be owned by any one individual or group. Instead, individuals or groups may be granted rights to use them. A water right is a legal authorization to use a predefined quantity of public water for a designated purpose ... "

A "water right" is "a right to a beneficial use of a reasonable quantity of public water for a beneficial purpose during a certain period of time occurring at a certain place."

"Senior" water rights are any created before June 30, 1885. Regardless of title to our land, if you are served by an ID, the ID's water right pertains. Kiona ID predates the BoR - very senior!

The Dept. of Ecology regulates and enforces water rights and sets stream flow levels.

**State Auditor's Office [www.sao.wa.gov](http://www.sao.wa.gov)**

ID's have an "accountability audit" and a "financial audit". Concerns addressed in the audit include:

- ID internal safeguards adequately safeguard public assets
- compliance with state law and ID's own policies and procedures for things such as receipts, bidding processes, work orders and grants.
- financial statements accurately represent the ID's financial position.
- overall accountability, integrity and openness in governance and financial statements.

KID, for example, recently passed its audit.