

**Conceptual Framework and Legislative Proposal:  
“Little R” Relinquishment and  
Conservation Operation & Management Measures**



**Soil Moisture Monitoring  
And Probes**

**Weather Forecast and Crop Use  
Information and Data**

**Irrigation Scheduling and  
Water Management**



**Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association  
Using Conservation and Water Resources Management  
For New Water Supplies and Irrigation Development**

**June 2008**

## **“Little R” and Conservation O&M Legislative Proposal**

### What Is “Little R” and Conservation O&M?

- “Little R” refers to “de facto relinquishment” of that portion of a water right—permit or certificate—that is not being “used” due to the *annual application* of conservation operation and management measures. These measures include the use/implementation of:
  - Soil moisture and monitoring probes.
  - Weather forecast and crop use data.
  - Irrigation scheduling and water management.

These measures require *annual costs and implementation* in order to secure conservation savings and water management objectives.

- The measures are used for row crop, field, and tree-fruit irrigation.
- Conservation O&M measures *do not* include capital project improvements, such as conversions to higher efficiency irrigation systems, or canal linings or pipe conversions/modifications.
- “Little R” *does not* deal with other, more complex, issues surrounding water right relinquishment (or de facto relinquishment). Its technical and legal scope is limited, but it would affect—or it can affect—almost all mainstem Columbia-Snake River direct pumpers (including the USBR Columbia Basin Project operations).
  - The geographic scope is limited to water rights diverting from the mainstem Columbia-Snake River system.

### Objectives:

The principal objectives are to:

- Expand the role of conservation and water management to meet increasing Columbia-Snake River water supply demands, consistent with the objectives of existing water management legislation (RCW 90.90).
  - Fewer new water rights would need to be issued to water additional irrigated acres.
  - All O&M water conservation savings would be eligible for water spreading to new ground, per the existing water code; water savings would be approximately 10% of the water right use, based on documented analyses and water right holder costs.
- Provide equity to all water right holders who apply conservation O&M measures. No one would be subjected to “de facto” water right relinquishment.

## “Little R” and Conservation O&M Conceptual Framework

General Authority & Adm. Action/Funding	Existing RCW Changes and Modifications	Policy and Technical Justification
<p style="text-align: center;">Primarily Authority <u>RCW 90.90</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstem Columbia/Snake River System.</li> <li>• RCW 90.90 Reviews (Ecology, CSRIA, Conservation Dists.) Point Toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conservation O&amp;M. (Cost-Effective and Savings Quantity).</li> <li>✓ Some Capital Project Conservation-Water Mangement.</li> <li>✓ Small Reservoirs/ASR (for Municipals).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Allowed Under, But Not Limited to, Existing CSRIA-WADOE VRA.</li> <li>• Direct Implementation Is Provided by Conservation Districts.</li> <li>• Seasonal Change/Transfers Required—for the Annual O&amp;M Savings Use.</li> <li>• Direct Implementation Costs Are Paid for by Water Right Holder.</li> <li>• Conservation Dist. Review and Compliance Costs Funded Under Existing RCW 90.90 Authority for Conservation &amp; Water Management Projects.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Specific <u>RCW Changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCW 90.90: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 90.90.10 (5) Modify Conservation Definition for O&amp;M Activities.</li> <li>✓ 90.90.30 Add Conservation O&amp;M Provisions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• RCW 90.14.140 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 90.14.140(j) Add O&amp;M Conservation Savings Exemption Per Revised 90.90 Provisions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• RCW 90.03.380 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Add Section to Allow for O&amp;M Changes Per Revised 90.90 Provisions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Policy and <u>Technical Justification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity Is Provided to All Water Right Holders for Annual Conservation Actions.</li> <li>• Water Is Made Available for New State Agriculture Demand and Economic Activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Each New Irrigated Acre Creates \$2,500-3,300 of Additional State Household Income.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Conservation Dist. Estimated Savings Is Established at 10-17%.</li> <li>• The O&amp;M Measures Are Well Defined: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ IWM Program.</li> <li>✓ CSRIA BMPs.</li> <li>✓ Irrigation Scheduling.</li> <li>✓ Weather Monitoring.</li> <li>✓ Soil Moisture Probes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The “Return Flow” Issue for Conservation O&amp;M Is Not Relevant to the Col./Snake River Mainstem Water Rights. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Real-Time Water Use Withdrawal Reductions.</li> <li>✓ O&amp;M “Return Flows Are Subjectively Measured--ECY 1210 “Return Flows” Are a Math Convenience Not Empirical Measures.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

