

VOICE of the project

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS REPORT:

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What the One Big
Beautiful Bill Act
Means for the Columbia
Basin Project



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“WHEN THE WELL’S DRY,
WE KNOW THE WORTH OF WATER.”
- Benjamin Franklin

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OCTOBER 2025 Due date for content: Friday, September 12, 2025 Publish date: Week of October 13, 2025	JANUARY 2026 Due date for content: Friday, December 12, 2025 Publish date: Week of January 19, 2026
APRIL 2026 Due date for content: Friday, March 13, 2026 Publish date: Week of April 13, 2026	JULY 2026 Due date for content: Friday, June 12, 2026 Publish date: Week of July 13, 2026

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS REPORT:
What the One Big Beautiful Bill Act Means for the Columbia Basin Project

On July 1, 2025, the Senate passed the reconciliation package by a 51–50 vote, with Vice President JD Vance casting the tie-breaking vote. The House followed on July 3, approving the final version by a 218–214 margin, which was then signed into law by President Trump on July 4th. The legislation, formally titled the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, includes significant changes to federal conservation and water infrastructure programs that could benefit stakeholders in the Columbia Basin.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION (BOR) WATER CONVEYANCE FUNDING

The bill includes \$500 million for BOR to restore and enhance water conveyance systems. This funding is available through September 30, 2034, and is specifically intended for construction, modernization, and infrastructure upgrades that improve water delivery.

For the Columbia Basin, this means potential support for expanding mainline lateral systems, repairing canals, and building pump stations—key components of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP) and broader regional water infrastructure.

An additional \$2 billion was authorized for surface water storage enhancements, which could support reservoir expansion and long-term water reliability.

RCPP FUNDING SHIFT: MORE FLEXIBILITY, FEWER RESTRICTIONS

The reconciliation bill also reconfigures the Regional Conservation Partnership Program



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(RCPP) by folding previous IRA conservation funds into the Farm Bill baseline. This removes the climate-smart restrictions that previously governed a major portion of the RCPP funding that was available in recent RCPP awards—potentially allowing the OGWRP to compete for an even larger pot of RCPP funds in the future.

For Columbia Basin producers, this means:

- Potential increased funding available through RCPP for OGWRP public systems and on-farm infrastructure.
- Fewer eligibility hurdles tied to climate metrics.
- Greater opportunities for irrigation districts and conservation partners to support surface water adoption.

The new reconciliation bill thus creates a dual-track opportunity:

- BOR funds can support large-scale infrastructure like canals and pump stations.
- More flexible and robust RCPP funds can potentially help increase funding for and acceleration of the OGWRP.

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- With longer timelines, fewer restrictions, and clearer funding pathways, the Columbia Basin Project is well-positioned to realize accelerated water delivery modernization!

FY26 ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL

On July 17, the House Appropriations Committee passed the FY26 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, with a full House vote still pending and unscheduled.

The accompanying committee report contains key language championed by the Columbia Basin Development League (CBDL) that explicitly supports the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OG-WRP). It affirms the Committee's backing

of Reclamation's involvement in delivering surface water to farmlands across Central and Eastern Washington and encourages Reclamation to proceed with program implementation.

In addition, the Committee directs Reclamation to deliver a comprehensive briefing no later than 180 days following enactment. That report must assess the costs, benefits, and regional implications of continued Columbia Basin Project development, including impacts on Tribal communities, salmon habitat, agricultural output, employment, and food security. Although this directive mirrors language originally included in the FY25 bill report, it has not been implemented due to Reclamation's current operation under the prior-year continuing resolution. 

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR



JON ERICKSON
MOSES LAKE



As the Chair of the CBDL, it is my pleasure to be deeply involved in what takes place within the organization.

Right now, we are experiencing an opportunity to usher in a new look for the League and I am elated to be a part of that. Our Board is working hard to make sure our stakeholders benefit the most out of some new transitions taking place and opportunities being presented. I look forward to seeing all of you at the annual CBDL conference and cannot wait to see what the next year has in store for us.

Respectfully,

Jon Erickson
Chair of the Board

A SEASON OF TRANSITION:

Welcoming New Leadership to the League



CBDL Friends,

As many of the League's stakeholders are in the midst of or preparing for another harvest, the League has been making preparations of another sort. You may have already seen the news, but I wanted to personally share with you that CBDL's management transition took effect on July 1st.

After nearly 15 years with the League, my team and I stepped away and the League welcomed new leadership. Following is the full press release.

The transition came at a good time; the Board is evolving its goals with renewed emphasis on outreach and stakeholder engagement, and those are among several areas in which the new leadership team excels!

With my departure, I wanted to share two specific things:

First, thank you! Fifteen years ago I knew very little about the Columbia Basin Project; the team in our office was similarly uninformed. So many of you have willingly – and patiently – shared incredible insights and knowledge, allowing us to learn so much.

Aside from empowering us to serve you, I am grateful for the personal growth you facilitated. A life-long resident of eastern Washington, admittedly, I used to drive through the Columbia Basin Project substantially ignorant of its value. You have forever changed my outlook on the blooming desert, and I am indebted and appreciative. You can continue to educate me at sara@501consultants.com.

Second, I am thrilled about the League's new organized and dedicated team, that is truly enthusiastic to jump into the League's work and engage with you to continue advancing policy issues and outreach for the Columbia Basin Project. Please join me in warmly welcoming Brit Kramer, Alison Ashton, and their team!

Warmly,

Sara Higgins

Former Executive Director
501 Consultants Inc.



Sara Higgins
Former Executive Director

Columbia Basin Development League Announces New Partnership with Red Barn Communications


LACEY, WA — The Columbia Basin Development League (the League) is pleased to announce a new partnership with [Red Barn Communications](#) (Red Barn) to support its management services.

Red Barn brings a strong track record of creative strategy, brand building, and integrated communications planning. With extensive experience serving mission-driven organizations, Red Barn demonstrates a deep understanding of conservation and recreation efforts, along with a shared passion for agriculture, natural resources, and infrastructure. The League is proud to partner with Red Barn to expand its visibility, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and advance the mission of completing and fully funding the Columbia Basin Project.

“As a firm grounded in strong values and committed to purposeful communication, we are honored to be entrusted to support the Columbia Basin Development League,” said Brit Kramer, Founder of Red Barn Communications. “The League plays a critical advocacy role in advancing policy, infrastructure, and economic development across the Columbia Basin. We are well positioned to help elevate the League’s voice, foster engagement, and highlight the importance of the Project’s continued, phased development.”

As this new chapter begins, the League extends its sincere appreciation to 501 Consultants, Inc. for over a decade of exceptional service. 501 Consultants has provided invaluable expertise to local, regional, and national nonprofits through both full-service management and project-based consulting. Their guidance has helped organizations – including the League – navigate complex strategic challenges and operate with integrity and impact.

While 501 Consultants has played a significant role in the League’s history, the transition to Red Barn reflects the League’s evolving communications goals and direction. Red Barn’s creative expertise, strong alignment with the League’s mission, and strategic focus on visibility, outreach, and stakeholder engagement make them a strong fit for supporting this next phase of growth and public awareness.

The Columbia Basin Development League looks forward to building on this strong foundation with Red Barn and to continuing its vital work on behalf of the Columbia Basin’s agricultural and economic future. 



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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

2026 CBDL Board of Trustees

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
GAIN PERSPECTIVE. BUILD IMPACT**

It may still be early in the year, but the League is already planning for 2026. Elections for the Columbia Basin Development League Board of Trustees will take place this October, with results announced at the League’s Annual Meeting on November 13, 2025.

If you are passionate about the future of the Columbia Basin Project, now is the time to raise your hand. The Nominating Committee is currently identifying prospective candidates for recommended inclusion on the ballot.

WHY SERVE?

Board service is more than a civic responsibility – it is an opportunity to:

Shape the Future
Expand Your Network
Strengthen Your Voice
Elevate Your Impact

Board service is a rewarding investment of time, talent, and leadership. If you have found value in the League’s work, consider taking the next step and helping to shape its direction. Learn more about CBDL and our mission at www.cdbl.org.

LINKS TO NOMINATIONS

[Board of Trustees Nominations
surveymonkey.com/r/WPQ362F](https://surveymonkey.com/r/WPQ362F)

[CBDL Award Nominations](https://surveymonkey.com/r/6MH5P3F)

To be considered, please click the link above or go to: surveymonkey.com/r/6MH5P3F
This form is due by September 15, 2025

Nominate Them for a CBDL Award!

**DUE DATE:
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

Help us shine a light on the individuals who have made a lasting impact on the Columbia Basin Project.

Now is the time to nominate someone whose commitment, grit, and passion deserve to be recognized by the community they have helped strengthen.




The Perseverance Award honors an individual who has demonstrated unwavering determination in the face of challenges – someone who pushes forward no matter the odds and gets the job done.



The Honorary Life Member Award is reserved for those whose enduring support and advocacy for the Columbia Basin Project have made a meaningful difference, whether or not they have held a formal role with the League.

Do you know someone whose legacy deserves the spotlight? Nominate them today and be part of celebrating their contributions at the League’s Annual Meeting on **November 13, 2025**.

Let’s honor those who have helped shape the Project’s past – and inspire its future. 

THE SHIFT IS ON:

What to Expect at the 2025 CBDL Annual Conference



CBDL asked – and you answered. Based on your thoughtful feedback in the recent member survey, this year's Annual Conference is being designed with your priorities front and center. You told us what matters: **Real updates, broader conversations, and a return to the League's founding purpose** of advancing the full Columbia Basin Project.

Now is the time to lock in the date.



November 13, 2025
Big Bend Community College
Moses Lake, WA

Here Is What You Will Be a Part Of...


Real Updates, Real Progress – While the final agenda is still in development, plans are underway to feature updates on the Odessa Ground Water Replacement Program, next-phase planning for the Columbia Basin Project, and broader conversations about infrastructure, permitting, and Reclamation activity.

Networking That Moves the Needle – This is where policymakers, farmers, agency leaders, and community voices come together. Past attendees call the networking “one of the most valuable aspects” of the Conference – it is where shared goals gain traction.

A Return to Purpose – Many members have shared that this year is a turning point – a chance to rebuild trust and momentum. With a broader emphasis on project completion and agriculture-wide benefits, the Conference will showcase how CBDL is stepping up to lead with clarity and conviction.

Voices from the Ground – Expect candid insights from irrigators, tech innovators, and regional leaders. We are lining up roundtables and panels that could span water law, rising energy demand, workforce challenges, climate resilience – and other hot-button issues members raise. Nothing is set in stone yet, but every session will be built around real-world stories and solutions that matter to the Basin.

This is your opportunity to get informed, get connected, and help advance the largest unfinished Reclamation project in U.S. history. If you have been waiting for a sign that CBDL is shifting focus – this is it.

Join us on November 13 at Big Bend Community College and be part of the conversation shaping the Columbia Basin's next chapter. 

CELEBRATING A LIFELONG ADVOCATE FOR AGRICULTURE: *Quincy's 2025 Honorary Farmer of the Year*



John Moody
Quincy's 2025 Honorary Farmer of the Year

This September, Quincy's Farmer Consumer Awareness Day (FCAD) honors a community leader whose dedication to agriculture and the Columbia Basin Project (CBP) spans decades. We are proud to share that CBDL Board Member Emeritus John Moody has been named Quincy's 2025 Honorary Farmer of the Year.

Each year, FCAD recognizes a local farm family and one individual who have significantly supported agriculture. John joins past honorees – including all three of CBDL's former Executive Directors – who have championed the farming community and the League's mission.

BRIDGING FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

FCAD began over 45 years ago to connect farmers and consumers, a vision carried

forward by founders Dennis Higashiyama and Chet Pedersen. John became involved in the late 1990s while with the Bureau of Reclamation and has since helped share the CBP story through educational displays and outreach.

“Personally, I am humbled,” John shared. “I have just been part of the team helping tell agriculture’s story to the public.”


After years behind the scenes, John will see the FCAD parade from a new vantage point – riding in it as the Honorary Farmer.

A VOICE FOR THE COLUMBIA BASIN

Though retired, John remains an advocate for the region. “I have moved from Reclamation's largest project to one of its oldest, where I was raised,” he said. “I want to see the Columbia Basin Project completed. That has always been my goal with the League.”

CARRYING A FAMILY LEGACY

John's favorite story illustrates his deep ties to agriculture and water: “On June 14, 1951, Miss USA contestants stood at Banks Lake holding a gallon of water from each state. Arizona's contestant had a half-full jug of Colorado River water, joking, ‘California stole the other half.’ That jug was delivered by my father using our Radio Flyer wagon before being flown to Washington for the CBP's ceremonial water launch.”

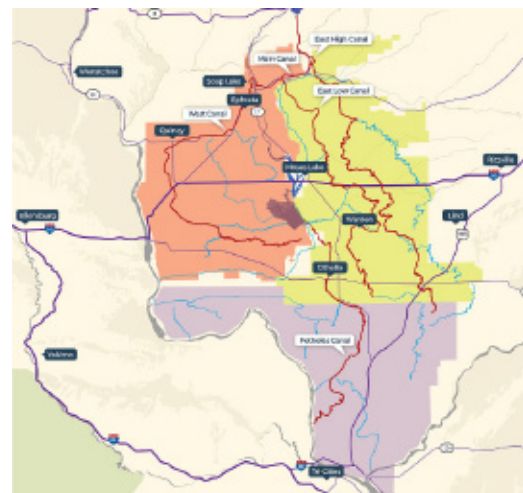
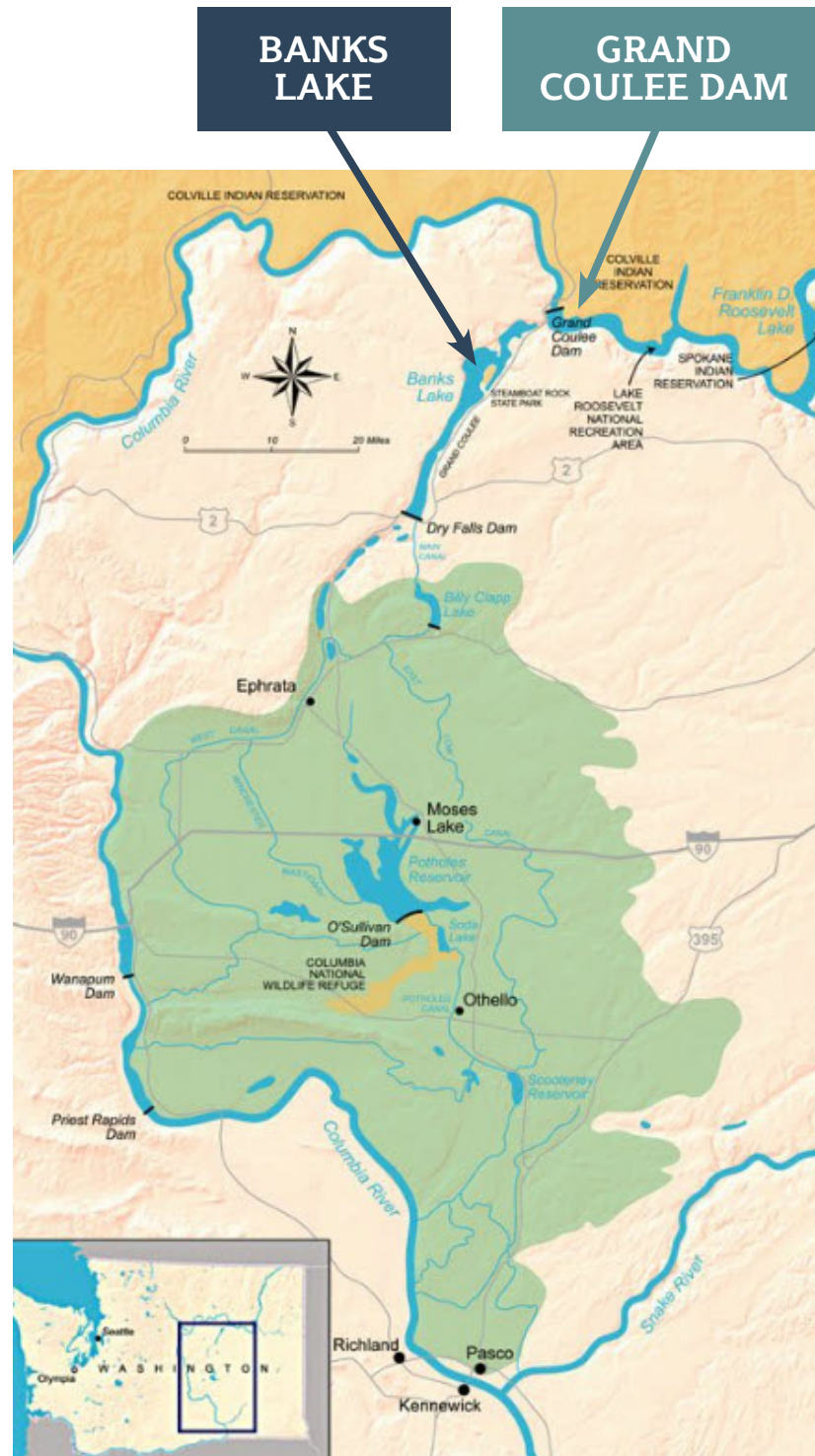
Please join us in congratulating John on this well-earned recognition. 

THE COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS

WHY IT MATTERS

The Columbia Basin Project (CBP) is a massive irrigation and water management system in central Washington State that transforms dry, desert-like land into some of the most productive farmland in the country. Managed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the project was authorized in the 1930s as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Its primary purpose is to divert water from the Columbia River for irrigation, power generation, and regional development.

At the heart of the project is **Grand Coulee Dam**, one of the largest concrete structures in the world. Water from the dam is pumped into **Banks Lake**, then distributed through hundreds of miles of canals and pipelines to irrigate more than 670,000 acres. While the original plan called for over one million acres, only about two-thirds has been developed to date.



Columbia River Irrigation Districts

1. AGRICULTURE:

The CBP enables farmers to grow high-value crops like potatoes, apples, wheat, corn, and carrots in an area that naturally receives very little rainfall. The irrigation provided by the project has helped turn central Washington into a key contributor to the U.S. food supply.

2. CLEAN ENERGY:

Grand Coulee Dam also generates massive amounts of hydroelectric power—over 20 billion kilowatt-hours annually—helping supply clean, renewable energy to the Pacific Northwest.

3. ECONOMIC GROWTH:

The project supports thousands of jobs in farming, food processing, energy, and related industries. Communities like Moses Lake and Othello have grown thanks to the economic opportunities the CBP has created.

4. WATER SECURITY:

With increasing pressure on water resources across the West, the CBP provides a more reliable and managed water supply, helping reduce dependence on depleting groundwater sources.

In short, the Columbia Basin Project is a powerful example of how thoughtful investment in infrastructure can transform a region—economically, environmentally, and socially.

The Columbia Basin Project is managed through three main irrigation districts: the Quincy-Columbia Basin, East Columbia Basin, and South Columbia Basin Irrigation Districts. These locally governed entities operate and maintain the complex network of canals, pumps, and laterals that deliver water from the Columbia River to farms across more than 670,000 acres. They ensure timely water delivery, manage infrastructure upkeep, and collect fees from landowners to support operations. The districts serve as a critical link between federal water infrastructure (like Grand Coulee Dam) and local agricultural users, helping to sustain high-value crop production, water efficiency, and long-term resource stewardship.

5. NATIONAL IMPACT:

Beyond regional benefits, the CBP is a national asset—supporting food production, renewable energy, and rural development. It's also a model for multipurpose infrastructure that balances agriculture, power, recreation, and conservation.



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As we navigate a transition, if you notice any inaccuracies or outdated information on the member list, kindly contact us at info@cbd1.org so we can update our records promptly.



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