



# United States Department of the Interior

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## BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Ephrata Field Office

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Mr. Tom Ferns  
US Department of Energy  
Richland Operations Office  
PO Box 550  
Richland WA 99352



Subject: Hanford Remedial Action Environmental Impact Statement  
(HRA EIS) (Your Letter Dated December 12, 1997)

Dear Mr. Ferns:

We apologize for the late response requesting information regarding the status of potential irrigated agriculture development on the Wahluke Slope (Slope).

At the present time, Reclamation has no plans for additional irrigation development on the Slope. However, there are lands on the Slope that have potential for irrigation development. Our recently completed Scattered Tracts Resource Management Plan identified about 8,000 acres held by Reclamation above the Wahluke Canal, comprising much of planning Blocks 27 and 37 where the long-term decision was postponed due to the uncertainty of future development. If additional lands were developed some enlargement of the Wahluke Branch and Potholes Canal facilities may be required.

Before Reclamation could make a decision regarding additional development numerous studies, including NEPA compliance, would need to be completed. Reclamation's policy requires these studies be cost shared and supported by entities such as the State or county. To date we have not been approached by any such entity.

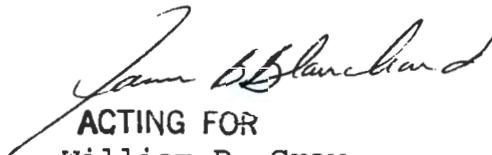
Regarding the Red Line Area, Reclamation's position continues to be that irrigation of land within the zone is not feasible as deep percolation losses would contribute to the slide potential

along the White Bluffs. We are not aware of any studies that would support changing this decision. Also the cost of providing drainage to these lands has been determined to be financially infeasible.

Reclamation holds a water right from the State of Washington that is sufficient to irrigate the authorized project. However, in February 1994, Reclamation instituted a moratorium on further diversions from the Columbia River until interim and long-term water requirements have been defined for the ESA listings. If additional lands were developed on the slope, a like number of acres would be removed from consideration elsewhere.

If we can provide additional clarification or further information, please call Jim Blanchard at (509) 754-0226.

Sincerely,



ACTING FOR  
William D. Gray  
Manager, Ephrata Field Office