

ANALYSIS OF HJM 4025

House Agriculture & Ecology Committee

January 15, 1998

BACKGROUND:

Land acquisition by the federal government for the Hanford Reservation was authorized in February 1943. The Wahluke Slope Control Zone, an area north of the Columbia River, was established on November 15, 1943.

The federal Department of Energy has deactivated its reactors at the Hanford Reservation and is decontaminating them and related areas. As the department goes through this process, it will make decisions on how to remove portions of its lands from Department of Energy control. The Wahluke Slope Control Zone is currently managed as a wildlife area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages one portion of these lands, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife manages the remainder of these lands.

H.R. 1811, referred to in the memorial, would require the State of Washington, and Benton, Franklin, and Grant Counties to create a Hanford Reach Protection and Management Commission by written agreement. The members of the Commission would be as follows: one resident of the county appointed by Benton County, one resident of the county appointed by Franklin County, and one resident of the county appointed by Grant County; one resident of the state appointed by the Governor; one resident of the state appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Energy; and one resident of the state appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. These members would appoint an additional member who is to be a resident of a county along or through which the Columbia River runs. (Section 5(b), H.R. 1811.)

The primary duty of the Commission would be to develop and implement a plan to manage lands conveyed to the state by the bill to . . . protect and enhance plant resources, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, recreational access, and other uses or resources prescribed by the Commission.— (Section 5(b)(7), H.R. 1811.) The measure would require conveyances of lands from the Department of Energy's Hanford Works to the state, to Adams County, to Grant County, and to Franklin County and permits the Secretary of Energy to convey additional property within the Hanford Works. (Section 4, H.R. 1811.) The lands would be conveyed to the counties only following their reporting to the Secretary regarding: the risk of and recommendations concerning slides in the White Bluffs Wasteway; and a comprehensive land use plan of the Wahluke Slope. (Section 5(f), H.R. 1811.) If the state did not fulfill its obligations under the measure regarding the commission, the lands conveyed to it would be

conveyed to the counties in which they are located and the counties would be required create a commission to manage the lands. If neither the state nor the counties fulfilled these obligations, the lands would revert to the United States. (Sections 5(c), H.R. 1811.)

In the interim following the conveyances and before the Commission adopted a permanent plan, the lands conveyed to the state would be managed under an interim plan approved by the governments of Benton, Franklin, and Grant Counties that is consistent with the purposes of the measure. (Section 5(b)(7), H.R. 1811.)

SUMMARY:

The U.S. Congress is requested to join with the state in creating a Hanford Reach Protection and Management Commission composed as prescribed in H.R. 1811.

The memorial further requests that:

- lands owned by the United States in the Hanford Reach area be conveyed to the State of Washington and to Adams, Grant, and Franklin Counties for management as prescribed and authorized in H.R. 1811; and
- the Commission develop and implement a plan to manage the lands so conveyed to protect and enhance plant resources, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, recreational access, and other uses or resources.