

Reform Act proposes changes in 160 acre irrigation limit

Comprehensive legislation to free a number of farming families from regulations which would limit federally-irrigated land to 160 acres per person was introduced in the Senate this week by Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore) and Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida).

The bill, entitled the Reclamation Reform Act of 1978, will increase the average allowances for farms receiving water from federal irrigation projects to 1,280 "Class 1" acres, or the equivalent in lands of lesser productive capacity. The Act will amend the 1902 Reclamation Law which placed a limit of 160 acres per person on the quantity of irrigable land for which a farming family may receive water from a federal project.

"I believe the Reform Act will go a long way in both preserving and protecting the family farm, a tradition that's well established in Oregon, against arbitrary limits fashioned quite literally in the horse-and-buggy days," Hatfield said. "At the same time it will insure that the true family farm does not give way to the absentee, corporate landlord whose closest contact with the land is a potted plant in a Beverly Hills office."

The Bureau of Reclamation estimates that there are 1.8 million acres in western states in excess of the 160-acre limit, including an estimated 16,979 acres in Oregon. Hatfield and Church are members of the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands which is currently considering the issue.

"This comprehensive pack-

age will help ease the already heavy burden of Northwest farming families, while still prohibiting non-farming interests from taking in millions of taxpayers' dollars through manipulation of reclamation laws," Hatfield said.

Under the 1902 Act, a farm family receiving federally-irrigated water was given a 160-acre allowance for each family member up to a total of four persons. One family with four or more members was thus allowed to own 640 acres of federally-irrigated land under the 1902 Act. They were also allowed an additional 640 acres of leased land for a maximum total of 1,280 acres. For a husband and wife alone, for example, the limit under

the 1902 Act for owned and leased land would be only 640 acres. Under the Hatfield-Church proposal all farm families, no matter how large, would be entitled to the 1,280-acre total of land considered "Class 1" by the Bureau.

If the land in question was of limited quality and required additional irrigation, the "equivalency" section of the Reform Act would allow for an expansion of the 1,280-acre limit. The equivalency test by the Bureau would be based on a number of characteristics including soil quality, crop adaptability, and costs of crop production.

The Hatfield-Church bill also approves pay-out provi-

sions contained in Bureau contracts. These provisions provide for the end of acreage limitations upon full payment by farmers of past construction costs obligated to them. The Reform Act would thus honor existing long-term commitments to farmers from the federal government. So-called "speed up" provisions contained in several Oregon irrigation district contracts would also be validated under the bill.

The proposal will, in addition, eliminate the requirement that farmers live within a 50-mile radius of the federally-irrigated land they farm. In its place, the Reform Act requires that a "qualified beneficiary" is an individual,

family or legal entity benefiting 25 or fewer persons, and that new purchasers must derive income from agricultural production, rather than mere rental of the land, for at least ten years prior to leasing that land.

"The provisions of this bill are not set in concrete," Hatfield said. "The Reclamation Reform Act is offered as a legislative foundation to confront a complex and very serious problem. I will continue to welcome suggestions from farmers and citizens alike in an effort to insure that a fair and constructive solution to this problem is found."

"Given the limits of information presently available to us, we must exercise extreme

care so that in the process of stopping corporate abuses of federal farm subsidies, we do

not disrupt Oregon's long-established pattern of family farming," Hatfield stressed.

St. Patrick's

Day LUNCHEON & CARD PARTY

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Cards 10 a.m.-12
Lunch 12-1 p.m.
Cards 1-2 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17
100F HALL LEXINGTON

Public Welcome

House committee OKs tax relief measure

The House Ways and Means Committee gave its approval last week to legislation that alleviates an inadvertent tax burden imposed on farmers receiving federal disaster and deficiency payments this year for 1977 crops.

The bill, sponsored by Oregon Congressman Al Ullman, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, now goes to the full House.

The tax problem for drought-stricken farmers and ranchers arises because a drought-induced paperwork backlog at the Agriculture Department resulted in many

1977 payments not being made until early this year. Many Oregon farmers, as well as

those in other states hit by the drought, received these late disaster and deficiency payments and now are faced with

having income this year from these payments as well as from the 1978 crop.

The legislation will allow a farmer to elect to treat the late payments as 1977 income if the farmer can establish, that, under usual business practice, income from the 1977 crops would have been reported in 1977.

WHEAT GROWERS LEAGUE ANNUAL MEETING

MONDAY, MARCH 13

7:30 p.m.

AT

ST PATRICK'S PARISH HALL

HEPPNER LIONS CLUB MUSTANG JACKET SALE

Buy a great, lightweight jacket and support the Heppner High School Band Uniform Fund.

Lined Jackets ...\$15 Unlined Jackets ...\$10

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For Your Jacket, Please Contact Lions Lee Hazen, Robb Rush, Frank Pearson, Or John Edmundson To Place Your Order

Jackets are being provided at cost by KROLL'S DEPARTMENT STORE and all proceeds will go to support the band's drive to earn money for uniforms.

This Message Sponsored In The Public Interest By

Morrow County Grain Growers INC.

U.N. Pilgrimage Speak-off Sunday

The United Nations Pilgrimage for Youth Speak-Off Contest will be held Sunday, March 12, at the Pendleton Odd Fellow Hall, 19 S.W. Dorion. The speeches begin at 2 p.m.

Sponsored by the Odd Fellow and Rebekah Lodges the contest will include speakers from Heppner, Ione, Riverside, Hermiston, and Ukiah. The students were chosen on

the basis of an essay each wrote entitled "Why I Would Like To Be Chosen to Make the United Nations Pilgrimage For Youth Tour".

The winner will receive an all expense paid bus tour, to Washington D.C., New York City and the United Nations, and many other points of interest. Everyone is invited to attend the speech contest.

YOU CAN STOP SMOKING

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Coming to Heppner March 26-30

A method of successfully proven by millions of Americans already. If you really want to quit, you can. The 5-Day Plan works!

Watch for: Posters giving time and location. A brochure in the mail describing the program and including a registration card.

For further information, call 989-8527 (or 676-9449).

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