

United States Senate

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PLATTE RIVER LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW

Washington, DC – The President today signed into law legislation to implement the federal share of the Platte River recovery implementation plan as part of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (S. 2739). The sponsors of the legislation, United States Senators Ben Nelson, Wayne Allard, Ken Salazar and Chuck Hagel, applauded this final step ensuring the future vitality of the Platte River region.

“Water use is always a perennial concern in the West and the Platte River Basin has the potential to provide the residents of this region with the necessary resources,” said **Nebraska’s Senator Ben Nelson**. “This bill ensures that this will occur, while also respecting the habitat of the threatened and endangered species of the area. This program has been in the making for some time now and I am pleased that it is now law.”

“When a program is developed that protects agricultural water rights and creates wildlife habitat protection it is a win-win for everyone involved. The Platte River recovery plan does just that and I am pleased that the President signed it into law today,” said **Senator Salazar**, a member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “The program allows continued water use and development along the Platte that is critical to our farmers, ranchers and local communities and I am proud that this sound conservation bill is now law.”

“This legislation addresses one of the most pressing needs in the West, ensuring that the Endangered Species Act does not stop water from flowing,” said **Senator Allard**. “I have been an outspoken critic of the Endangered Species Act, but when I see a program designed to actually help recover species and protect water rights from federal curtailment I support it. I am pleased to see this common sense legislation signed into law.”

“This legislation is important in our efforts to responsibly balance necessary water use in the Platte River Basin while improving habitats for four threatened and endangered species. The Governors of Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado, the U.S. Department of the Interior and local stakeholders have all worked together to craft and implement this cooperative agreement. This is good news,” said **Senator Hagel**.

In late 2006 the Governors of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming and the Department of Interior signed the final program agreement after working together since 1997 to develop a recovery plan that benefits certain species yet allows continued water use and development along the Platte.

S. 752 – passed out of the committee as HR 1462 - will authorize the Secretary of Interior to proceed with the program and includes \$157 million to carry it out. The cost will be shared 50/50 by the states and federal government. Through the program the states will provide benefits for the endangered and threatened species as well as land, water, and scientific monitoring and research to evaluate benefits of the program.