



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

**CITATION**

**PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD**

**JOHN W. KEYS III PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

In recognition of the training program developed by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Oregon Water Resources Congress with several Oregon and Idaho irrigation districts to enhance Reclamation employees' understanding of the operation of an irrigation district.

With an ever changing workforce in the Pacific Northwest, the Bureau of Reclamation has worked to ensure that its new employees swiftly gain a full understanding of the challenges faced by irrigation district managers. At their annual meeting in December 2005, the Oregon Water Resources Congress asked Reclamation to work with them to develop a training program that would enable Reclamation employees to gain a better understanding and appreciation for the operation of an irrigation district. Former Commissioner John W. Keys III encouraged and supported the effort, recognizing that it would foster better working relationships with the districts. The John W. Keys III Partnership Program was developed collaboratively between Reclamation and the Oregon Water Resources Congress with several Oregon and Idaho irrigation districts, including the Owyhee, Talent, North Unit Irrigation Districts and Boise Board of Control. To date the collaboration has successfully developed an outstanding learning opportunity for Reclamation and district personnel, greatly facilitating interagency understanding and cooperation. Reclamation has led efforts to develop the program components, which have helped establish relationships that allow both entities to understand, discuss, and resolve water issues. This program educates participating Reclamation employees on the relationship between Reclamation projects and the delivery of water to the end user. The irrigation districts in turn gain a better understanding of Reclamation procedures and perspectives. The program includes a close-out session with participating employees to provide feedback on the program and suggestions for improvement. Overall, the program is working to break down barriers and improve working relationships between Reclamation and the districts. Based on feedback received from both Reclamation and irrigation district participants, this one-of-a-kind learning opportunity has been extremely successful. For developing an outstanding training program that encourages cooperation, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Oregon Water Resources Congress are granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.