

DALLES WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT ACT

SEPTEMBER 15, 2025.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WESTERMAN, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 655]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 655) to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain Federal land to the City of The Dalles, Oregon, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Dalles Watershed Development Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CITY.—The term “City” means the City of The Dalles, Oregon.

(2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.

SEC. 3. THE DALLES CONVEYANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—If, not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the City submits a written request to the Secretary for conveyance of the land described in subsection (b)(1), the Secretary shall, as soon as practicable thereafter, convey to the City, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to such land.

(b) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The land described in this paragraph is the parcel of real property generally depicted as “parcel A” on the map, consisting of approximately 150 acres of National Forest System land located in the Mount Hood National Forest in Oregon.

(2) MAP.—

(A) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “map” means the map entitled “The Dalles Conveyance Parcel A” and dated November 4, 2024.

(B) MINOR ERRORS.—The Secretary may correct minor errors in the map.

- (C) AVAILABILITY OF MAP.—A copy of the map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of Forest Service.
- (3) SURVEY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the National Forest System land to be conveyed under subsection (a) shall be determined by a survey satisfactory to the Secretary.
- (c) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be—
- (1) subject to valid existing rights;
 - (2) made without consideration;
 - (3) made by quitclaim deed; and
 - (4) subject to such additional terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.
- (d) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—As a condition of the conveyance under subsection (a), the City shall pay all costs associated with the conveyance, including the cost of a survey under subsection (b)(3).
- (e) USE OF CONVEYED LAND.—
- (1) IN GENERAL.—The land conveyed to the City under subsection (a) shall be used by the City for public purposes, including for municipal water supply and use and related infrastructure needs or expansions.
 - (2) REVERSION.—If the land conveyed under subsection (a) is used in a manner that is inconsistent with the requirement of paragraph (1), all right, title, and interest in and to the land shall revert to the United States.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 655 is to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain Federal land to the City of The Dalles, Oregon.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Settled on the banks of the Columbia River, The Dalles is the largest city in northcentral Oregon’s Wasco County.¹ The city’s residents rely on water stored in the nearby Crow Creek Reservoir, which is located in the Mount Hood National Forest and sourced by South Fork Mill Creek.² This single reservoir provides 80 percent of the city’s annual water supply for domestic and commercial use.³ While the city owns much of the land occupied by the current reservoir, its dam, and the surrounding watershed, some sections extend onto adjacent U.S. Forest Service (USFS)-managed land.⁴ The Dalles must apply for and receive a special use permit to access and maintain those portions of the municipal watershed that fall under USFS’s jurisdiction.⁵ However, USFS’s special use permit imposes considerable administrative burdens and limits future operations, repairs, and expansions of the reservoir and its associated dam.

With its population expected to increase over the coming decades, The Dalles should expect a concomitant rise in its long-term water-resource needs.⁶ This means that the city must secure improved access to its watershed. Accordingly, city officials have discussed plans to increase the Crow Creek Reservoir’s current capacity from

¹Susan Buce, “The Dalles,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, April 5, 2024, <https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/the-dalles/>.

²Wasco County Watersheds, “The Dalles Watershed,” accessed March 24, 2025, <https://www.wascowatersheds.org/the-dalles>.

³Congressman Bentz Introduces Legislation to Improve the City of The Dalles, January 30, 2025, <https://bentz.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-bentz-introduces-legislation-improve-city-dalles-water-security>.

⁴Per the map entitled, “The Dalles Conveyance Parcel A” and dated November 4, 2024. This map is on file with the Committee.

⁵*Id.*

⁶Cole Goodwin, “Population Growth in The Dalles is Slowing But More Housing is Still Needed,” *CCC News*, December 14, 2023, <https://columbiacommunityconnection.com/the-dalles/population-growth-in-the-dalles-is-slowing-but-more-housing-is-still-needed>.

900 to 3,000 acre-feet.⁷ H.R. 655, introduced by Congressman Cliff Bentz (R–OR), provides a long-term solution to this problem by transferring approximately 150 acres of National Forest System lands that encompass the reservoir and its adjacent lands to city ownership. The conveyance of this parcel from the USFS to local hands would cut red tape by removing the recurring cost and administrative burden of abiding by the current special use permit. In fact, the City Manager of The Dalles estimated that this bill would save the city at least \$150,000 in costs.⁸ Together, the provisions in this legislation would improve the efficiency of the Crow Creek Dam’s current operation, support the growing city’s water-management efforts, and reduce the federal estate.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 655 was introduced on January 23, 2025, by Representative Cliff Bentz (R–OR). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Federal Lands. On April 29, 2025, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on the bill. On June 25, 2025, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 655 by unanimous consent. Rep. Cliff Bentz (R–OR) offered an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute designated Bentz 023. The Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute was agreed to by unanimous consent. The bill, as amended, was ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing by the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held on April 29, 2025.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

Section 1 names the bill the “The Dalles Watershed Development Act.”

Section 2. Definitions

Section 2 defines key terms, including “City” and “Secretary.”

Section 3. The Dalles conveyance

Section 3 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a 150-acre parcel of National Forest System land in the Mount Hood National Forest to the City of The Dalles, Oregon, should the city submit a written request for conveyance within one year of enactment of the law. This section specifies that the conveyance will be made subject to valid existing rights and without consideration. Section 3 further stipulates the land must be used for public purposes, including municipal water needs and related infrastructure needs, or the land will revert to federal ownership. Finally, Section 3 stipu-

⁷Tom Peterson, “TD watershed needs an Act of Congress in move against climate change,” CCC News, January 25, 2025, <https://columbiacommunityconnection.com/the-dalles/td-watershed-needs-an-act-of-congress-in-move-against-climate-change>.

⁸*Id.*

lates terms and conditions of the conveyance, including the map and legal description of the land, surveys, and administrative costs.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII AND CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT

1. *Cost of Legislation and the Congressional Budget Act.* With respect to the requirements of clause 3(c)(2) and (3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and sections 308(a) and 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following estimate for the bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

H.R. 655, The Dalles Watershed Development Act			
As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on June 25, 2025			
By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2025	2025-2030	2025-2035
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	0	0
Increases <i>net direct spending</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036?	No	Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply? No	
		Mandate Effects	
Increases <i>on-budget deficits</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2036?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

H.R. 655 would direct the Forest Service to convey 150 acres of federal land in the Mount Hood National Forest to the city of Dalles, Oregon, without consideration and subject to valid existing rights, if the city requests the land. Under the bill, the city would be required to pay all costs associated with a conveyance, and the land would need to be used for public purposes.

According to the Forest Service, the land does not generate any receipts for the federal government and any costs associated with conveying the land under the bill would be paid by the city. Thus, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would have no effect on the federal budget.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Emma Uebelhor. The estimate was reviewed by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,
Director, Congressional Budget Office.

2. *General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective

of this bill is to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain Federal land to the City of The Dalles, Oregon.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

According to the Congressional Budget Office, H.R. 655 contains no unfunded mandates as defined by the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Directed Rule Making. This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pursuant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95–220, as amended by Public Law 98–169) as relating to other programs.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill's purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources, H.R. 655 would make no changes in existing law.