

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

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Chairman McClintock: We must restore abundance as the cornerstone of our federal water and power policies

Bureau of Reclamation FY12 Budget Scrutinized by Subcommittee on Water and Power

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Subcommittee on Water and Power, held an oversight hearing today to examine the FY 2012 budget request for the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock also focused on Reclamation’s wasteful spending and a divergence from its original mission of providing water and power abundance that has resulted in lost jobs and economic hardships for Westerners.

“It is the objective of this sub-committee to restore the original – and as yet unfulfilled mission of the Bureau of Reclamation – to develop and utilize our nation’s vast water and hydroelectric resources to build a new era of abundance and prosperity for our nation. The failure of the last generation to keep pace with our water and power needs has caused chronic water shortages and skyrocketing electricity prices that are causing serious economic harm,” said Chairman McClintock. “I hope that this Administration will become a partner in this new era of abundance rather than an obstacle. The rationing of shortages has never solved a shortage – only a policy of abundance can do that. We have wasted not only money but time, and we can afford to waste no more of either.”

Last year due to regulations imposed by Reclamation to divert water from farms to a three inch fish, some communities in California’s San Joaquin Valley recorded 40% unemployment. This year, with Sierra Nevada snowpack at near record levels, San Joaquin farmers may only get 50% of their water allocations, keeping thousands out of work. Reclamation’s policies have clearly contributed to increased unemployment and higher consumer costs, particularly in rural communities.

“Even with reservoirs nearly overflowing, anticipated water allocation levels are nowhere near the full allocation farmers should receive. Increasing water storage must be a top priority in the Valley,” said Rep. Jeff Denham. “It is incomprehensible that farmers cannot receive the full allocation of water that they have a contract for even in wet years such as this one with a year-to-date snowpack at 127%.”

Water lost due to environmental flows doesn’t just affect irrigators or municipal water users—hydropower generation also suffers greatly. Glenn Canyon Dam in northern Arizona has lost up to 1,000 megawatts, or enough to power one million homes, due to environmental mandates. Some wholesale electricity customers served by Reclamation

power facilities are paying 16 to 30 percent higher rates because of environmental related regulations. Every megawatt of clean, cheap, reliable hydropower we lose must be replaced by more expensive forms of electricity—costs that will ultimately be passed on to the ratepayer.

“The Administration is creating regulatory and administrative uncertainty that threatens thousands of jobs in my district and the long-term water supply for Arizona. Take for example the Navajo Generating Station (NGS), located near Page, AZ - the lack of coordination between the BoR, BIA, and the Office of Surface Management on critical services contracts related to the operation of the plant threatens its viability and the primary source of power for the infrastructure that pumps water to 80% of Arizona's population,” said Rep. Paul Gosar (AZ-01). “With extremely high unemployment in my district, as well as the scarcity of water in Arizona, it is time we implement commonsense policies that allow our region to address our water and power needs, while also protecting the environment.”

Instead of focusing on building new water storage and infrastructure, the Bureau of Reclamation is spending scarce taxpayer dollars on questionable projects. At a time when the federal government is running record budget deficits, Reclamation has funded dubious ventures such as toilet exchange programs, tiger salamander research, and “City Makeovers.”

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