

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 31, 2009

CONTACT: [Emily Lawrimore](#) or [Jill Strait](#)
202-226-2311

Republicans Call for Action to Address Man-Made Drought
Projections: Up to 35,000 Jobs Lost and 300,000 Acres of Farm Land Unused



Ranking Member Doc Hastings, along with Representatives Devin Nunes, Tom McClintock, Kevin McCarthy, Ken Calvert and George Radanovich, hold a press conference to highlight the man-made California drought and policies that provide water for fish (like the three-inch smelt shown above), but not people.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Natural Resources Committee held a full committee hearing today on the “*The California Drought: Actions by Federal and State agencies to address impacts on lands, fisheries and water users.*” Witnesses, including several members of California’s Congressional delegation, testified that this is a man-made drought, resulting from Endangered Species Act regulations that have diverted much-needed water from California families on the farm to three-inch Delta Smelt fish in the bay. The man-made actions have been devastating to California’s San Joaquin Valley where it is estimated that this year alone up to 35,000 jobs will be lost and 300,000 acres of farm land won’t be used because water has been diverted.

Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) explained, “Communities dependent on irrigated agriculture are now approaching 40% unemployment as they watched over 83 billion

gallons of water – which was water normally dedicated to the fields -- go out to the ocean in the last month alone. It's important to protect lands and endangered fish, but our government's environmental policies shouldn't make our communities endangered in the process."

Republicans have offered numerous solutions to provide necessary relief to families, farmers and businesses in California's San Joaquin Valley who are struggling to survive in the midst of a man-made drought. Solutions include passing legislation (specifically H.R. 996 and H.R. 856) to suspend the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act during times of drought emergency to ensure that the Delta pumps operate at historic capacity, encouraging the Administration to take steps to allow for water transfers and temporary barriers to keep smelt away from the pumps, and offering new water storage as a longer-term proposal to help the State in alternating times of drought and floods.

Congressman Devin Nunes (CA-21) warned, "This Congress has stood silent for nearly two years as San Joaquin Valley residents have been starved of water. Democrat leaders need to stop hiding behind the courts and bowing down to special interests. If they do not act within the next 30 days, it's over. We will witness the collapse of modern civilization in the San Joaquin Valley.

Congressman Ken Calvert (CA-44) testified that there is no proof that diverting water to the ocean will actually benefit the Delta Smelt fish. "If this Committee is going to continue to give federal agencies the authority to take actions that kill jobs and harm our economy for the benefits of species, then the American people deserve clear and undeniable evidence that those actions are in fact benefiting the species."

Congressman George Radanovich (CA-19) noted that "the draconian regulations that turn simple fish into the worshipful gods of the environmental community and ignore the inalienable rights of people have led us to conclude that Government does not work for us any more—we need the Government to protect the safety and happiness of people, not fish."

Congressman Wally Herger (CA-02) stressed the need for "a sustainable, balanced and comprehensive solution to this water situation that will allow us to equitably meet the needs of all water users, human and otherwise. Continuing down the same path we have been on for decades is not acceptable."

Additionally, 17 members of the California Congressional delegation today sent the [attached letter](#) to Committee Chairman Nick Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings, requesting field hearings on the California drought in order to get "the Committee to step outside the Washington beltway and hear firsthand accounts from citizens throughout California impacted by the drought."

#

<http://republicans.resourcescommittee.house.gov>

[Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Twitter](#)