



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Local Farmers, Community Members Call for Immediate Action to Resolve the California Water Crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Committee held an oversight field hearing in Fresno, CA on “*California Water Crisis and Its Impacts: The Need for Immediate and Long-Term Solutions.*” At the hearing, Members and witnesses discussed the need to resolve differences and pass legislation to bring immediate and long-term water supplies to California. In February, the House passed H.R. 3964, *The Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley Water Reliability Act*, a bill aimed at restoring long-term water supplies. The Senate has not acted on this bill or any bill to mitigate water problems for the state of California.

“In 2009 and 2010, a man-made drought brought this region to its knees, where communities experienced 40 percent unemployment and food lines handed out Chinese-produced carrots to the victims of senseless regulatory drought. This followed with two good water years,” [said Chairman Hastings](#). “During those relatively good times, the House passed a comprehensive bill intended to ensure that man-made drought never returned. That bill fell on deaf ears in the Senate and the Administration. Now, we are back to yet another drought and this one could be far more catastrophic than before. History is once again repeating itself.”

Most of California is in a serious drought due to lack of rainfall over the last two years. This natural drought has been exacerbated by federal and state regulations and environmental lawsuits that diverted water away from farmers in order to help a 3-inch fish. For the first time ever, farmers and communities in the San Joaquin Valley are facing a zero percent allocation of water from federal and state authorities. The natural and man-made droughts have had devastating economic consequences, costs thousands of jobs and fallowed tens of thousands of acres of fertile farm land.

Witnesses at today’s hearing emphasized the need for a solution to bring water back to the San Joaquin Valley and provide certainty to the farmers who produce the majority of the nation’s produce.

“As much as my community is tied to agriculture, we are equally tied to water. In 2009,

when water allocations reached as low as 10 percent, Huron's unemployment rate climbed to almost 40 percent. Businesses who normally hired as many as 3,500 farm workers in previous years needed less than 600 because of the drought. As a result of the 2009 drought, many in my community were forced into food lines just to feed their families. The drought we face today is by far more serious" – **The Honorable Sylvia Chavez, Mayor, Huron, California**

"Due to lack of water this year, my family and I had to make the decision to 'dry up and let die' close to a thousand acres of producing almond trees, as well as keeping fallow another two thousand acres of open ground. Ground that we have had to keep idle for close to eight years because of water shortages. Shortages that were created and controlled by regulations that have been imposed and brandished like weapons." - **Larry Starrh, Co-Owner Starrh and Starrh Farms, Shafter, California**

"We have taken tens of thousands of acres of the most productive farmland in the world out of production when 25 percent of the American population goes to bed hungry every night. The failure to prioritize, invest and plan leaves California ill prepared and ill equipped to address the human and financial consequences brought on by this third year of drought." - **Steve Knell, General Manager, Oakdale Irrigation District**

"President Obama, Governor Brown, and Senator Feinstein have put forward initiatives to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to mitigate drought damage. WE DON'T NEED MONEY – WE NEED WATER! It is preposterous to offer billions of dollars to combat climate change/global warming and think that will help the California water supply. Any meaningful substantive progress in improving our situation has to begin with some common sense." – **Mark Watte, Farmer, Tulare, California**

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