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Opening Statement
The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman

House Natural Resources Committee
Water and Power Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on

***“Water for Our Future and Job Creation: Examining Regulatory and Bureaucratic Barriers
to New Surface Storage Infrastructure”***

February 7, 2012

Water supply certainty has a profound and direct impact on Central Washington where our economy is heavily dependent on irrigated agriculture. This region, which I have the honor to represent, is home to two of the largest federal water projects in the West, including the Grand Coulee Dam, which is our nation’s largest.

Together, these two projects irrigate more than a million acres of farmland, provide numerous recreation and flood control benefits and provide over 21 billion kilowatt hours of carbon-free, renewable hydroelectric power to customers throughout the United States.

Before these projects were constructed, this area was an arid desert where little but tumbleweeds would thrive. Today, it is one of the most productive and diverse agricultural areas in the world, providing more apples, pears, cherries, mint and hops than in any other part of the country

Despite the successes of these projects and others in the West, they have been under constant assault from those with extreme agendas. Regulations and associated litigation have hijacked these projects, to the point where their very purposes have been compromised and the construction of new water storage to continue to meet the needs of these regions is nearly impossible to achieve.

Water users throughout the West have been forced to stand by and watch powerlessly as increasingly burdensome federal rules based on questionable science and never-ending litigation make it more and more difficult to continue to receive the water they need

Today, we will hear from several witnesses who will describe a regulatory system gone awry. They will outline a painfully long permitting process that often takes longer to complete than actual project construction. In one example this permitting process required the examination of 52 project alternatives. To me, that sounds more than a little excessive.

Our existing water supply is under strain and the demand is likely to increase. As bad as things are now they are only going to get worse if the Obama Administration moves forward with their initiative to modify the Principles and Guidelines.

The Principles and Guidelines provide standards that are critical in determining how federal water infrastructure decisions are made and developed. Water users are justifiably concerned about this Administration's efforts to elevate non-structural and environmental elements over economic and safety benefits in the planning phase of project development. This could undermine efforts to build new, and rehabilitate old, water infrastructure.

My district is representative of much of the West; where water goes, jobs follow. On the flip side, when water does not reach farmers' fields or orchards, jobs are destroyed. Agriculture is Central Washington's leading employer, supporting 160,000 jobs statewide, and –is heavily dependent on a reliable water supply.

According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington's 1.7 million acres of irrigated crop land generate approximately \$4.8 billion in crops sold each year—crops that feed America and the world. The Northwest includes an area that is one of the most productive agricultural regions in the nation. It also provides a vital navigational link and clean, renewable power to millions each year.

It's this generation's turn to recognize our growing water needs and take steps to meet it. Conservation will undoubtedly continue to play a role to meet our future water needs, but it alone will not be enough. We must also embrace other water supply options, including building additional water storage. America needs an all-of-the-above-water supply strategy.