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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**

**On Tuesday, October 29, 2013**

**1324 Longworth House Office Building**

**Water and Power Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on**

***“A Roadmap Increasing our Water and Hydropower Supplies: The Need for New and Expanded Multi-Purpose Surface Storage Facilities”***

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Thank you, Chairman McClintock, for holding this important hearing today.

I firmly believe that America needs an “all-of-the above” water supply strategy. Today’s hearing is a step in that direction.

Water storage has been the key to economic prosperity and a way of life in my Central Washington district, which is home to two large federal water projects and the Columbia River power system. Together, these two projects irrigate more than a million acres of farmland, make possible a vital navigation link for millions of tons of grain and commodities annually, provide numerous recreation and flood control benefits and provide over 21 billion kilowatt hours of carbon-free, renewable hydroelectric power to customers in the Pacific Northwest.

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. As we will hear later today, Yakima County is one of the top agricultural areas in the nation, ranking 12<sup>th</sup> nationally in the total value of agricultural products sold. Without a doubt, this is possible because a prior generation had the vision of capturing spring runoff to deliver water during dry times.

Surface storage continues to have lasting and positive impacts not only in Central Washington but to the country in general. Yet, these projects are under constant assault by litigation and other pressures to change their operations to other purposes. I will continue to oppose these policies that change existing projects and their historical mission. What is obvious is that it is necessary for us to build more surface storage if we want to maintain our prosperity.

I’m aware of those who say that conservation is the only way to produce more water. Conservation can and should play a role; however, it alone is not the answer. After all, you cannot conserve water that has already been lost to the ocean or simply doesn’t exist.

We will hear testimony today – particularly from Mr. Derek Sandison, from the Washington Department of Ecology -- that conservation has its limits and that more storage is necessary to account for lost water and potentially drier times. Yet, we will also hear that federal rules and regulations make many such individual projects cost prohibitive and infeasible. Amidst the painfully long permitting process and the uncertainty associated with it, most of these projects and investment interest are negatively compromised before they even get off the ground.

This is a paradigm that must change because the supply and demand numbers simply don't add up. In the Yakima River Basin alone in my district, over 450,000 acre feet of additional water storage capacity is needed for multiple human and species needs. This is not some new discovery. Yakima has been in need of additional water storage for many decades, and achieving this goal is a top priority of mine. Yet, I am concerned that our existing federal regulatory framework may not allow this to happen and that without action, drought and dry water years could again bring economically devastating rationing of water supplies. Conservation and construction of storage must go hand-in-hand for this to work. Real credit is owed to Mr. Sandison and the many local partners of all stripes who came to the Working Group table – and have stayed at the table – to seek a truly collaborative approach to solving Yakima's water needs. Real, demonstrable progress has already been made and while it will take time, patience and creativity to achieve, building new storage is absolutely critical.

It's this generation's turn to recognize our nation's growing water needs and to take steps to meet it. For us to have another water supply renaissance, we must embrace new or expanded storage so that we can truly have an all of the above water supply strategy well into the future. We have the power to make that happen and we will push legislative reforms to bring regulations back to reality.

In closing, I again want to thank Mr. Sandison and other witnesses for their leadership and for being here today. You are the ones on the ground who deal with water supply uncertainty every day. Your stories and needs will help guide this Committee in bringing about resolution to these pressing issues.