

OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JERRY LEWIS BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER OVERSIGHT FIELD HEARING ON: “QUESTIONABLE FISH SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAWSUITS: JOBS AND WATER SUPPLIES AT RISK IN THE INLAND EMPIRE”: OCTOBER 18, 2011, HIGHLAND, CALIFORNIA

Three million people could be flooded out of their homes. More than 100,000 acres would be under water. As many as 3,000 people might be threatened with drowning. The economy would be hit with a \$15 billion loss. These are the figures the Army Corps of Engineers used when they called the Santa Ana River the worst flood threat west of the Mississippi – mind you those numbers are from 1987. Since then, Congress and the Corps have worked together to construct Seven Oaks and Prado Dam at a cost of over a billion dollars. I’ve seen the predictive models for a major flood event without the dams and I can tell you it was worth every penny.

When these dams were constructed a great deal of environmental review was done. At the time, the Santa Ana Sucker was not a listed species. When it was listed in 2000 the agencies worked together to designate habitat, but it wasn’t enough for the Center for Biological Diversity who made it their mission to have this splendid project destroyed to ‘protect’ a fish.

Last year the US Fish and Wildlife Service, after a lawsuit from CBD, expanded the critical habitat designation for the Santa Ana Sucker. As part of this process, the Service was required, by law, to do a study on economic impact – a study in which they admit they didn’t really do the job. An independent economic analysis by Dr. John Husing, who is in the room today, estimates that this designation will cost the region \$2.7 billion in lost water and jobs. The Service’s report guessed it would only be \$6 to \$8 million.

If this action by the Fish and Wildlife Service continues, we will not have the water to grow. As of today the unemployment in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties stands at 13.6 and 14.7 percent. This can’t continue, but it will if we don’t give our businesses a chance to succeed. To build something you have to prove adequate supply of water – a requirement this part of the country already struggles to meet. How can I tell my constituents in this room, and around my district, that we won’t create jobs because we don’t have the water?

I’m convinced, that instead of spending another half trillion dollars of taxpayer money on a questionable stimulus plan, Congress needs to help private industry create more jobs by reducing the burden of over-regulation.

In the House of Representatives, we’ve been searching for ways to get the government out of the way of private job creation. Just before we left Washington, the House passed legislation to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from creating new rules that threaten many industries – and could affect the very survival of the cement industry in San Bernardino County and across the nation.

I believe it’s time to look just as closely at the Fish and Wildlife Service which is threatening thousands of jobs in this community because of over-regulation on behalf of the Santa Ana Sucker fish.