

**STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS  
CONCERNING**

**H.R. 5244 – Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act**

**MAY 24, 2016**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding H.R. 5244, the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act.

The Department does not oppose H.R. 5244 and would like to work with the Committee on this important piece of legislation.

H.R. 5244 authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the Saint Francis Dam Disaster Memorial at the Saint Francis Dam site in the County of Los Angeles, California, for the purpose of honoring the victims of the Saint Francis Dam disaster of March 12, 1928. The Act would establish a National Monument on 440 acres of the Angeles National Forest, as depicted on the map entitled “Proposed Saint Francis Dam National Monument” dated June 18, 2015. The Monument would be created for the purposes of conserving and enhancing for the benefit and enjoyment of the public the cultural, archeological, historical, watershed, educational and recreational resources and values of the Monument.

The legislation authorizes the Secretary to accept, hold, administer, invest, and spend any gift, devise or bequest of real or personal property made to the Secretary for purposes of developing, designing, constructing, and managing the Memorial.

The legislation directs the Secretary to develop recommendations to Congress regarding the planning, boundaries, design, construction and long-term management of the Memorial, including recommendations regarding a visitor center and educational facilities two years after enactment. The Secretary would develop the recommendations after consulting with appropriate Federal agencies; State, tribal and local governments and the public.

In addition, the legislation directs the Secretary to develop, no later than three years after the enactment date of this Act, a Monument management Plan and a watershed health assessment for the Monument to identify opportunities for watershed restoration. The Secretary would develop a management plan in consultation with appropriate Federal agencies; State, tribal and local governments and the public.

The Department would like to work with the bill sponsor and Subcommittee to reduce administrative costs and burdens to the forest and Region. Given current budget trends, the Angeles National Forest may not have the capacity or resources to plan, create and maintain a new Memorial and Monument.

The Department would like to work with the Bill Sponsor and the Subcommittee to identify any concern in the legislation by creating a legislative map that would provide Monument boundary lines that take into consideration existing land uses, management needs and Forest Plan designations.

The Department is supportive of the authority to accept donations for the Memorial under section 3(c). However, the Department is concerned that it will not be able to rely solely on donations to plan, design, implement, construct and maintain a new Memorial.

The Department would also like to work with the bill sponsor and Subcommittee to extend the timeframe in section 4 to make recommendations for the Memorial from two years to three and the timeframe in section 6(a) to develop a management plan for the National Monument from three years to four. These extensions will allow the Agency to take into account for budgeting purposes the additional work associated with implementing the bill and the time needed to consult with other federal agencies, State, tribal, and local governments, and the public.

The Department does not support the requirement to develop a watershed health assessment for the Monument given the existing watershed condition assessments the Angeles National Forest is undertaking as part of the Watershed Condition Framework. In addition, the Forest has already identified other higher priority watersheds that need attention. The Department believes that this tragedy can be appropriately memorialized without obligating the Forest to complete a duplicative watershed assessment.

This concludes my remarks on the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.