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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 Wednesday, September 10, 2014**

**1324 Longworth House Office Building**

**Water and Power Subcommittee Legislative Hearing on H.R. 5412, "The Bureau of Reclamation Surface Water Storage Streamlining Act"**

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PENNY DODGE  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

"Thank you, Chairman McClintock, for holding this important hearing today. I firmly believe that America needs an "all-of-the above" water supply strategy.

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. 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. Today, this desert has been transformed to one of the most productive and diverse agricultural areas in the world. 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.

As we will hear today, we need more storage in light of growing and diverse needs. Conservation alone is not the answer. The Yakima Valley is doing great work in conserving water over the past several decades – but conservation alone isn't the answer. Several hundred thousand acre feet or more storage is needed. This means more water for people and fish and that's why those in the Yakima Valley are pursuing more multiple-benefit storage.

As federal irrigation projects, the federal government plays a lead role in development of new and expanded storage. Careful analysis and study is needed. However, as we have seen in California, we don't want good proposals to be studied to death and have paralysis-by-analysis leaving people high and dry when a natural drought coupled with federal endangered species regulations make things much worse.

It is painfully clear, given the Bureau of Reclamation's inaction on storage in California, that the agency's feasibility study process needs to be modernized in a productive way.

For this reason, I've introduced the Bureau of Reclamation Surface Water Storage

Streamlining Act. It's a common sense bill based on the precedent of the newly enacted Water Resources Reform and Development Act, or WRDA, that only four Members of this House opposed.

The bill simply mirrors the process that was applied to the Corps of Engineers in that recent public law by setting the same standards and expectations for the Bureau of Reclamation to become more transparent and accountable in how it operates. It does not circumvent federal environmental law and allows numerous instances for the Bureau of Reclamation to extend studies with the simply requirement that the agency explain why more time is necessary.

Overwhelming bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate endorsed this approach for Army Corps projects, and President Obama signed it into law, so it certainly is a reasonable model for modernizing for Bureau of the Reclamation process. If the Corps study process for water projects can be reformed, then Reclamation's can in the same manner. The bill will simply place the two agencies on the same track.

We owe it to current and future communities – rural and urban – to build the next generation of surface storage. The status quo is unacceptable. Today's California will be other places in the West tomorrow.

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.

In closing, I want to thank the witnesses here today who have firsthand knowledge of why we need new or expanded water storage for the future. I appreciate the Family Farm Alliance's and the National Water Resources Association's support for my bill and look forward to your testimony."

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