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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement
The Honorable Tom McClintock
Chairman

House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water & Power
“Examining the Proposed Fiscal Year 2014 Spending, Priorities and the Missions of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Four Power Marketing Administrations and the U.S. Geological Survey’s Water Resources Program”
Tuesday, April 16, 2013

Today the Subcommittee on Water and Power meets to review the programs of the federal agencies in charge of producing and transporting the vast water and power resources of the United States. These agencies have a profound and significant role in the economic development of our nation.

One of the main questions we ask today is whether they will recover and restore the vision of abundance as their principle objective, or continue down the path of shortages, subsidies, and spiraling electricity and water prices that we are currently on.

During the last two years, this Subcommittee has sought to return to the policy of abundance that produced the growth and prosperity of the American West. Just last week, we passed legislation to move aside the bureaucracies that have blocked the installation of small hydro-electric generators on existing canals and pipelines. We have challenged the heavy subsidies ladled out to wind and solar schemes that could not stand on their own merit. We have challenged the efforts of this administration to tear down four perfectly good hydroelectric dams and the fish hatchery on the Klamath.

The majority of this committee remains greatly concerned over the spiraling electricity bills consumers would pay under the policy set forth by the Energy Secretary – even in its current, diluted form – that would force hydropower ratepayers to pay for wildly expensive wind and solar projects. And, although we passed our plan to end the federal government-induced drought in California’s Central Valley, the Senate and the Administration failed even to engage in this discussion. That same dismal situation is returning – over the past six months, over 800,000 acre feet once destined for Central Valley farmers has been deliberately diverted to the ocean and \$1 billion in economic activity has been lost due – all for the amusement of the Delta Smelt – a three inch minnow.

The Commissioner will repeat his goal to “increase available water supply for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and environmental uses in the western United States by a cumulative total

of 790,000 acre feet.” Let’s be clear about what he means by this. He is not talking about increasing our water supplies by 790,000 acre feet – he’s talking about reducing human consumption by that amount. The future this administration seeks is one in which families are encouraged, threatened and, if need be, forced to reduce consumption through higher water and electricity bills, higher taxes and intrusive government regulations.

Compare this to the 2.3 million acre feet of additional water storage from the long-delayed Auburn Dam in California, as just one example, and one gets a sense of just how sadly distorted and lacking are the administration’s policies.

I frankly do not understand a water and power policy that lavishes billions of dollars of taxpayer money to place wildly expensive and unreliable windmills on federal rights of way, but does everything it can to impede private investors from placing hydropower generators in existing canals and pipelines. I do not understand a policy that, despite growing electricity shortages, seeks to destroy existing hydroelectric dams while adamantly opposes new ones. I do not understand a policy that forces one community to subsidize the outrageously expensive water projects of another, while forcing the release of billions of gallons of water into the Pacific Ocean. Perhaps the administration witnesses can make sense of such a policy.

But until they can, this committee will proceed to identify and eliminate regulatory burdens that are impeding development of the vast untapped water and power potential of our nation and resist attempts to sacrifice our existing water and power resources on the altar of the environmental left.

The administration’s testimony makes it clear that we can expect more of the same from them: increasingly severe government-induced shortages, higher and higher electricity and water prices, massive taxpayer subsidies to politically well-connected and favored industries, and a permanently declining quality of life for our children, who will be required to stretch and ration every drop of water and every watt of electricity in their bleak and dimly lit homes.

I believe that this sub-committee will seek a different path: one that leads to a new era of clean, cheap and abundant hydro-electricity; great new reservoirs to store water in wet years to assure abundance in dry ones; a future in which families can enjoy the prosperity that abundant water and electricity provides and the quality of life that comes from that prosperity. This committee seeks to restore a nation whose children can look forward to a green lawn, a backyard garden, a family swimming pool, affordable air-conditioning in the summer and heating in the winter, brightly lit homes and cities and abundant and affordable groceries from America’s agricultural cornucopia.