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TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

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

Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
Committee on Natural Resources

On Tuesday, June 24, 2014

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Water and Power Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on

**“New Federal Schemes to Soak Up Water Authority: Impact on States, Water Users,
Recreation and Jobs”**

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PENNY DODGE
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

“Thank you, Chairman McClintock, for holding this hearing.

Today’s examination of how proposed federal regulations will impact multi-purpose land and water uses on and off federal lands is an important when it comes to protecting and expanding our water and power supplies.

Republicans on the Natural Resources Committee have pursued an “all-of-the-above” agenda not only on energy but for water supply also. Our efforts to provide future supplies from new or expanded water storage, canals, conservation and efficiency through common sense regulatory improvements and financial incentives is the exact opposite approach taken by this Administration.

We can foster water development for people and species if the federal government chooses not to erect hurdles to new projects. Yet, the two proposals in front of us – the EPA’s “Waters of the U.S.” and the Forest Service’s new “Groundwater Directive” do nothing more than make it more difficult to rehabilitate or build new projects that benefit agriculture, municipalities, species and habitat.

A witness before us today, Mr. Larry Martin, who lives and works in the Yakima Valley of central Washington state and representing the National Water Resources Association, will testify today about the benefits of the Yakima River Basin Integrated Water Resource Management Plan. This diverse stakeholder-based approach could provide new and expanded water storage to help both people and fish. Yet you will hear today the Forest Service’s top-down Groundwater Directive could “delay or derail the implementation of this vital, innovative and broadly supported plan” because reservoir improvements are on Forest Service lands.

To make matters worse, the EPA’s “Waters of the U.S.” proposal could shut down development on a broad scale outside of federal lands. We are told that the proposal does not impact irrigation canals or ditches, yet this Washington, DC-based regulation has so many ill-defined terms that it will make it easier for litigious groups to sue and stop such projects, even conservation and efficiency projects.

This Administration's mantra seems to be that if it flows – even for a few weeks out of the year – that it must be regulated by the federal government. Yet, the Administration failure to defend these proposals to the American people and to this Subcommittee today is telling. Especially so in the face of the water and power experts before us who must live on the front lines of federal regulation every day.

I commend our witnesses for travelling here today to enlighten this committee on how such ill-conceived regulations will add costs to consumers and may actually harm the environment. And, I commend Chairman McClintock for his leadership in holding this hearing. ”

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