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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
THE HONORABLE KEN CALVERT, CHAIRMAN

H.R. 901, AUTHORIZING A NEW BRIDGE AT FOLSOM DAM

TESTIMONY OF COUNCILMEMBER JEFFREY STARSKY
CITY OF FOLSOM, CALIFORNIA

April 1, 2003

MR. CHAIRMAN and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Jeffrey Starsky and I serve on the City Council of the City of Folsom, California. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today regarding H.R. 901, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to construct a bridge on Federal land west of and adjacent to Folsom Dam in California.

I wish to begin by thanking you and the members of the Subcommittee on Water and Power for holding this hearing this afternoon. The citizens of the City of Folsom, Sacramento County, El Dorado County, and Placer County need your assistance in helping us adjust to the recent closure of Folsom Dam Road, a major regional connector and lifeline for many local and regional businesses and families. This hearing today is a critical step in the life of H.R. 901, and demonstrates your concern and commitment to our city and our region.

On behalf of the City of Folsom, I also wish to thank Congressman Doug Ose for his leadership and for introducing H.R. 901. Congressman Ose has served his constituents and the nation well since first being elected in 1999. Folsom is proud to have Congressman Ose represent us in the United States Congress, and we appreciate his commitment to our City, our region, and the State of California.

In addition, we wish to thank Congressman John Doolittle for cosponsoring H.R. 901. Congressman Doolittle has served the City of Folsom in the House of Representatives for over a decade with distinction and honor, and our City values deeply his hard work, dedication, and commitment to our City and Northern California.

By way of background, The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a dam on the lower American River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction on Folsom Dam in 1956. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation now operates the dam. The reservoir holds just under one million acre feet of water when filled to operational capacity. The dam's power plant has three penstocks delivering 6900 cubic feet per second to turbines producing approximately 10% of the power used in Sacramento each year.

Three river crossings were inundated and lost in the 1950's when the reservoir filled up: Mormon Island Bridge, Rattlesnake Suspension Bridge, and Salmon Falls Bridge. While the Salmon Falls Bridge was located upstream and is accessible today, the other two crossings were never replaced. Each crossing included two lanes, thus four lanes were lost as a direct result of dam construction.

The federal government and others recognized security risks posed by traffic on Folsom Dam Road, but the matter never seemed urgent until September 11th changed America's way of thinking about security within the United States. In one morning, the issue of traffic atop the dam was transformed into a distinct and critical issue of national significance.

The new bridge at Folsom probably would never have been the subject of its own congressional hearing without the tragedy of September 11th. It is likely the project would have continued to play a minor role in Sacramento's flood control debate. I believe this is an important point to remember B the need for the new bridge transcends flood control and is, in fact, a security issue.

Even prior to September 11th, Congressman Ose and Congressman Doolittle recognized the need to move traffic off the dam to a new bridge. H.R. 2301, introduced in the last Congress, would have achieved that goal. Now, H.R. 901, introduced by Congressman Ose and cosponsored by Congressman Doolittle, carries forward the effort to provide a bridge to replace Folsom Dam Road which, by the Bureau of Reclamation's own admission, was a major transportation artery for the City of Folsom as well as Placer County and El Dorado County.

Almost one year ago I testified before this same Committee in strong support of legislation authorizing construction of a bridge to replace Folsom Dam Road. During that hearing, my regional colleagues and I emphasized the need to ensure the security of Folsom Dam and Folsom Reservoir. We pointed out that removing automobile traffic from Folsom Dam would help prevent a catastrophic failure and flood caused by a terrorist act. We testified that a major breach caused by a terrorist act would result in a titanic flood B hundreds of thousands of lives would be at immediate risk, as would the capitol of the fifth largest economy in the world.

We insisted that a new bridge replacing Folsom Dam Road would be essential for the physical safety and economic stability of our City and the entire Sacramento metropolitan region. We also outlined the costs and heavy burdens our City and our region would bear if the Bureau of Reclamation closed Folsom Dam Road prior to having a new bridge in place.

As the Committee is aware, the federal government drew the same conclusions regarding the security

of the dam. The federal government took action and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation closed Folsom Dam Road on February 28, 2003. I am here today to tell you that our prognosis of closure offered to you one year ago was, unfortunately, quite correct. The City of Folsom and the citizens of our region now bear the heavy burdens of the Bureau's sudden and complete closure of Folsom Dam Road.

I am not suggesting that the Bureau's decision was unjustified or hasty. But, in fact, the closure did occur suddenly, with little warning, and with no plan in place for assisting the region in handling the disruption of traffic patterns established over decades.

Last year, I testified that closing Folsom Dam Road without providing a replacement bridge would do significant and lasting damage to our local and regional economy and environment. Only a short time has passed since closure, but I can report that closure has, in fact, done significant damage to our local and regional economy and environment. For example, closure without replacement costs the City \$15,000 a month in traffic control costs alone. These direct and quantifiable costs may seem insignificant viewed on the federal level, but I can testify without reservation that the costs are enormous locally and regionally.

Public safety has also been compromised by the closure. Specifically, our police and fire departments have lost a primary access which severely impacts response times. Also, the routes emergency vehicles must use are now heavily impacted by traffic which has been re-routed from the now closed Folsom Dam Road.

We are gathering additional facts regarding other direct costs to the City. As a procedural matter, I would request that the Committee leave the record open temporarily so the City can provide additional impact information as it becomes available. But the real costs to our economy and environment are widespread, enormous, and can neither be easily nor accurately quantified. We see these costs being borne by the people of Folsom and our region every day. We see 18,000 additional vehicles each day now clogging the streets of our City. We miss meetings and we are late to pick up our children from school. We burn expensive gasoline and pollute our air while waiting for traffic to cycle through intersections designed to carry a fraction of the traffic now imposed on the City.

I can report to the Committee that businesses located along impacted roadways have suffered immediate and significant negative impacts. Negative impacts on businesses are not only felt near the closed road entrances, but also all along the newly heavily congested alternative routes. Customers are finding it very difficult to enter and exit parking lots, and traffic congestion has driven shoppers away from local business. It is important to note in particular that the impacted routes run through the heart of the City's redevelopment area, putting the City's significant redevelopment efforts and opportunities at risk.

Last year, we framed the twin issues quite clearly: ensuring the physical security of Folsom Dam, and ensuring the economic security of the City of Folsom and our region. The Bureau's decision to close the road without a plan to replace the road addressed the first issue while simultaneously and immediately undermining the second. H.R. 901 addresses the significant local and regional negative impacts of a federal response to a grave national security risk. The federal government needs to take responsibility for these impacts and mitigate closure by way of providing a bridge.

We who live in the Sacramento region are quite familiar with the negative impacts of the closure of federal facilities due to national security concerns. In the past decade we have endured the costs of the closure of

three major military facilities: Mather Air Force Base, McClellan Air Force Base, and the Sacramento Army Depot. In each case, the federal government's decision to close its facilities had significant, immediate, and lasting negative impacts locally and regionally.

However, in the case of base closure, the Department of Defense worked with our region to mitigate the impacts of its decision to close the facility. The Air Force and the Army spent significant amounts of money to help our region during and after the closure of each facility. The Department of Defense assisted our region through funding and technical assistance in adjusting to the loss of the federal facility. In short, the Department of Defense did not merely pull up stakes and put a lock on the gate.

The positive results of the efforts of the Department of Defense are real and measurable. The facilities have transformed into important and positive economic engines for our region. The federal government's acknowledgement of responsibility for assisting local and regional government respond to base closure should serve as a model in the case of the Bureau of Reclamation's decision to close Folsom Dam Road. Without the same high level of federal assistance, the impacts of Folsom Dam Road's closure on national security grounds will be borne entirely by the City of Folsom and the citizens of Placer and El Dorado Counties. Furthermore, the negative effects of closure will be felt throughout the entire Sacramento Metropolitan region.

There are distinctions to be drawn between base closure and our current situation. While military bases do come with significant negative characteristics—for example, the costs associated with environmental clean up at closed bases are real and significant—military facilities also come with significant positive features and facilities. In the case of Mather Air Force Base—renamed Mather Field—the facility is now a major hub for freight movement thanks to its excellent runway and access to major surface transportation corridors. McClellan's superior facilities and transportation access have drawn important businesses to headquarter there. However, Sacramento would have been unable to take advantage of the positive attributes of these facilities without direct and active assistance—technical and funding—from the Department of Defense.

In the case of Folsom Dam Road, there are neither direct nor indirect benefits to closure beyond ensuring dam security. While this is a critical objective, we cannot view this matter in the vacuum of national security. There are real and negative impacts as a direct result of closure without replacement. Borrowing from the Department of Defense model once again, national security needs are linked with economic needs. That is why DOD put so much effort and funding into base reuse. DOD recognized the shortcomings of trading military readiness for regional economic security without mitigation, and DOD took responsibility and action to help ensure a safe transition for the local and regional economy. We ask the federal government—specifically, the Bureau of Reclamation—to do the same in the case of Folsom Dam Road.

As I testified last year, the new bridge would provide extremely important and direct benefits to our region. Our City and our region have attempted to address traffic congestion and air pollution for years. In fact, Folsom recently completed a new bridge across the American River at a total project cost of \$75 million. This new bridge, which was built without federal funds, dramatically improved automobile circulation in our city and regionally. However, the benefits of the new bridge have been severely undercut by the loss of the Folsom Dam Road as virtually all traffic formerly using the dam road now uses the new bridge or the old bridge nearby.

There are other positive outcomes of going forward with the new bridge that are unrelated to security and are also critically important to our City and our region. A new four-lane bridge at Folsom Dam is an

indispensable component of the six-county Sacramento Region=s Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the area=s federally-mandated regional transportation plan for the next twenty years. But H.R. 901 cannot be viewed as a congestion mitigation bill. The bill represents recognition by the federal government that it must help our region deal with its decision to close its facility.

It was vitally important to get traffic off the dam as quickly as possible. However, we must also ensure that our goal is achieved in a responsible manner. We must work together to ensure that local and regional economic stability is maintained and traffic flow is managed as best as possible while the new bridge is under construction.

Prior to the February 28th closure, approximately 18,000 vehicles a day crossed the dam. The road served as a major regional traffic connector providing access between jobs and housing in three different counties. Some of the larger industrial and commercial enterprises that benefit from this connection include Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Blue Cross and a number of other major employment centers.

The people who used the dam road were traveling to and from work and school. They were conducting business and going shopping. They were enjoying the Folsom Lake Recreation Area, one of the most popular state recreational facilities in the nation with over one and a half million visitors annually. While the overriding concern is one of security, it is also clear that closing Folsom Dam Road without a replacement will be devastating to the local and regional economy.

We learned the impact of temporary closure several years ago when repair work required lengthy Folsom Dam Road closures. Several businesses were forced to close and others were deeply hurt economically. Traffic was horrible, police, fire, and medical response times increased, and the situation aggravated an already dire air quality situation locally and regionally. In fact, Congress recognized the cost of limited closures and authorized up to \$100,000 in reimbursement to the City of Folsom for its costs.

Now the situation is much worse as we have experienced significant population increases locally and regionally and the closure is permanent rather than temporary. We must recognize the economic, traffic circulation, and air quality needs and realities in our region. It is important to note that these three matters are points of national significance and federal involvement. The Committee should be aware of the remarkable growth of communities adjacent to Folsom Lake over the past decade. The City of Folsom=s population grew from 15,000 to our current 56,000 in a few short years. Eastern Sacramento County, the City of Roseville and southern portions of Placer County, and El Dorado County can also report exponential growth levels. The recent permanent closure has been a terrible shock to our system.

We are aware that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers previously recommended the construction of a temporary bridge to handle redirected traffic while the dam is modified pursuant to prior congressional authorization. While the Corps= interest in minimizing the impact of closure is well-placed, it still does not make fiscal sense to put \$20 million into a temporary structure when that amount covers almost one third the cost of a permanent, full-service structure. Congressman Ose=s legislation recognizes the importance of spending our limited federal resources prudently as well as the value of doing something right the first time around. Simple math demonstrates the fiscally responsible approach of foregoing the temporary fix and applying those funds to a permanent, four-lane replacement bridge.

We would like the Subcommittee to know that we have endeavored to meet with other local interests regarding H.R. 901. Through those efforts, we feel we have covered enough bases to feel comfortable in fully supporting Congressman Ose=s legislation. We met with the Bureau of Reclamation, our other regional congressional representatives, and our representatives in the Senate. We have talked with other local and

regional governments as well as state officials. We believe that H.R. 901 is the best approach to achieve our goals.

Some continue to ask whether the Bureau of Reclamation should be authorized to construct the bridge. There are really three questions here: whether the Bureau has the capability to build the bridge, whether the Bureau should build the bridge, and whether the Bureau has adequate funding to build the bridge.

Regarding capability, we direct the Subcommittee to a letter to the *Sacramento Bee* from Bureau Commissioner John Keys, wherein he wrote, in part:

Ythe reference to the Bureau of Reclamation not having bridge building capabilities is simply not correct. Reclamation has designed and built many large bridges throughout the West. The beautiful arch bridge that spans the depths of Glen Canyon in Arizona is one example Y Reclamation designed and built the Foresthill Bridge that spans the American River at Auburn YThe property where the new bridge would be located is Reclamation land, and Reclamation is quite capable of building the bridge we=ll design.

The Bureau has as much capability to design and build the new bridge as other federal agencies. It has built bridges in the past. In fact, it built the large bridge standing only a few miles upstream from the proposed location of the new bridge.

Second, the Bureau should build the bridge. This project replaces a federal facility operated by the Bureau of Reclamation and recently closed at the direction of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. It is a Bureau facility and a Bureau responsibility. It is incorrect to suggest, as some have, that H.R. 901 Athrows the Bureau=s mission out the window.@ The Bureau=s mission to protect water and related resources led it to the decision to close Folsom Dam Road. It is not, as some would suggest, unreasonable for the Bureau to replace the crossing it closed in order to protect the dam. However, the City stands ready to assist the bureau and is willing to take on whatever tasks are appropriate to construct the project efficiently and effectively.

Third, we do understand that the Bureau=s current budget does not include funding for the new bridge. We support adding funding to the Bureau of Reclamation=s budget for this project if additional funding is needed to build the bridge and allow the Bureau to carry out its other responsibilities. Congress and the Administration set federal fiscal priorities, and Congress and the Administration can decide whether to provide funding to the Bureau of Reclamation to build the new bridge in light of the Bureau=s decision to close Folsom Dam Road. Whether the Bureau or some other federal agency builds the bridge, a decision to provide federal funding of some flavor will need to be taken.

Mr. Chairman, in closing I would once again like to thank you and your colleagues for holding this hearing today. We understand that your committee is extraordinarily busy, and the fact that this hearing has occurred underscores both your commitment to ensuring the safety and security of Americans as well as the clearly established need for the passage of H.R. 901. We also again wish to thank Congressman Ose and Congressman Doolittle for all their work on this legislation and on behalf of the City of Folsom.

The City of Folsom urges the Subcommittee on Water and Power to report favorably on H.R. 901 as soon as possible. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and this concludes my formal

statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Again, thank you.

The Honorable Jeffrey Starsky

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