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Testimony  
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Hearing on the Role of New Surface and Groundwater Storage in Providing Reliable Water and Power Supplies and Reducing Drought's Impacts  
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Chairman Radanovich and committee members, thank you for inviting me here today. My name is John F. Sullivan and I am the Associate General Manager of Water for the Salt River Project in Arizona. It is my privilege to participate in this hearing and to speak on the importance of water storage, both in providing reliable water supplies and in reducing the impacts of drought.

The Salt River Project (SRP) was one of the first federal reclamation projects and is the largest water provider in the metro-Phoenix Area. SRP is responsible for the operation of six storage reservoirs and delivers almost 1 million acre-feet of water a year. The water supplied by SRP is used on approximately 250,000 acres located in the central portion of the metropolitan Phoenix Valley.

SRP was born out of drought and the need for a reliable water supply. Early settlers quickly realized that to survive in the Phoenix Valley they needed to regulate the highly variable flows of their primary water source, the Salt River. A serious drought at the turn of the 20th Century reinforced this need. In response, Valley leaders banded together by forming the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association, later known as SRP. The leaders sought federal funding, which was ultimately made possible by the 1902 Federal Reclamation Act. The result was the construction of Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River, which was completed in 1911.

The construction of Roosevelt Dam, along with five other storage reservoirs, has helped to produce a reliable water supply for the Valley. Initially, SRP predominately supplied water for agricultural purposes. However, the rapid population growth in the Southwestern United States beginning in the 1950's and continuing through today has caused farmland to be replaced by subdivisions, businesses, and industries. Currently, about 85% of SRP's water deliveries are for municipal and industrial uses. This same shift in water demand is happening throughout the West.

I am not here today to rehash past battles over water projects, but instead, to focus on meeting future water needs and possible solutions.

Growth and the accompanying changes have increased the need for SRP and other water providers in the West to invest in innovative water resource management programs that further increase the dependability and reliability of water supplies. As stewards of our water supplies SRP has invested in the construction of new storage facilities, developed supplemental water supplies, lined and piped delivery systems, adopted and promoted new conservation technologies, and installed automated delivery systems. SRP's investments have been made with the goal of providing a long-term reliable water supply.

An example of how SRP has been able to further increase the dependability and reliability of its water supplies is the recent construction of a facility to store surface water and reclaimed water underground. In a partnership with Valley cities, SRP built the Granite Reef Underground Storage Project (GRUSP) in the bed of the Salt River. GRUSP is Arizona's largest recharge project and has stored over 200 billion gallons of surplus water since its creation in 1994.

Now at the turn of the 21st century the Valley is once again in the midst of a serious drought. However, unlike the drought at the turn of the 20th century, the Valley is better prepared. Water storage facilities and innovative water management programs are the foundation for this preparedness.

Last year at this time, the 10th year of the current drought, storage within SRP's reservoir system was less than 50 percent of capacity and we were facing a third year of reduced allocations. Fortunately, this winter Arizona received an abundance of precipitation. The SRP reservoir system is now 94 percent full and water allocations have been restored. Having the ability to store water during this wet year is vital if the region proves to be in a 20- to 30-year drought cycle, as some experts have suggested.

Even though SRP was able to store much of the runoff that occurred this winter, over one million acre-feet of water was

spilled into the bed of the Salt River because of limited water storage capability. In light of the potential on-going drought and the continued rapid population growth, the Valley would have benefited greatly from the ability to store this water.

SRP is continuing to undertake efforts to increase its ability to store water. SRP is again partnering with Valley cities to construct a second underground storage facility. Additionally, SRP is working to acquire Blue Ridge Reservoir and its storage rights in north central Arizona. However, the overall increase in storage capacity has been minimal, particularly given the incredible rate of growth in the region.

SRP is not unlike the West as a whole. The West has experienced tremendous growth over the last thirty years, yet there has only been a minimal increase in water storage capacity. It is now time to consider the need for and method of additional water storage and water resource management programs, to help provide reliable water supplies to the growing areas of the West.

As growth continues, limited water supplies will need to be stretched to avoid water supply problems and conflict. Water management programs, including new water storage, will be important components in avoiding water supply crises in the future. Mr. Chairman and committee members, may I draw your attention to an exhibit titled "Potential Water Supply Crises by 2025." The exhibit is taken from the Department of Interior's program "Water 2025: Preventing Crisis and Conflict in the West" and highlights areas within Arizona that may experience water supply problems in the not too distant future.

While there is not one solution for these complex water supply problems, new surface and groundwater storage facilities are options that could greatly reduce the potential for future crises and conflict in these areas. For instance, the ongoing development and construction of underground storage facilities in the Phoenix and Tucson areas has been and will continue to be a key component towards increasing the reliability and extending the limits of the available water supplies. Furthermore, the utilization of the water from Blue Ridge Reservoir may be instrumental in addressing the perennially drought prone crisis area of the East Verde River watershed, a part of SRP's total watershed.

Given the limited water supplies and the rapid growth in the West, solutions to water supply problems will likely require both non-federal and federal involvement. The construction of viable solutions to these problems will require the participation of all stakeholders, including those with differing positions. These parties will need to be committed to collaborating and forming partnerships to implement solutions.

Finally, water supply solutions involving the construction of new water storage facilities could be expensive. The federal government will undoubtedly be asked to assist with this expense. While the federal government will no longer provide the same financing arrangements it did through the Bureau of Reclamation during the last century, the federal government's financial assistance will be necessary. Much of the cost of future water storage projects must be borne by the project beneficiaries; however, federal sources of revenue will remain important.

As we look forward to the year 2025 and the water supply conditions for Arizona, discussions such as the one you are hosting today will be essential for insuring the existence of long-term reliable water supplies for the citizens of Arizona. The history of the development of the SRP water supply system serves as an example of the importance of water supply storage. Finding solutions to potential problems will not be easy and will require time, perseverance, and money. This Committee's active role in this process is encouraging and SRP looks forward to continued participation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon on this important subject.