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NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Water Storage Vital to Rural Communities, Job Creation, Economic Growth

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power held an [oversight hearing](#) today on “*Water for Our Future and Job Creation: Examining Regulatory and Bureaucratic Barriers to New Surface Storage Infrastructure.*” The hearing highlighted the regulatory burdens that hinder vital water storage improvement projects that help create jobs, increase agriculture production, generate hydropower and grow the economy and common sense ways to overcome those hurdles.

Cumbersome environmental regulations have delayed critical water storage projects for years while urban growth, environmental litigation and age strain current water storage infrastructure. Rural communities, ranches and family farms across the country are dependent on a dependable water supply, which is directly linked to storage capacity. Current and new dams and reservoirs provides affordable emission-free electricity to millions of Americans, supports the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands hard-working families and protects America’s food security.

The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has built more than 600 dams over the last century, however over 66% of their facilities were constructed over 50 years ago. A recent BOR study found nearly one hundred potential sites for new surface storage, yet due to environmental regulations and other factors it has been over a generation since BOR built multiple large scale water storage facilities.

“Regulations and associated litigation have hijacked these projects, to the point where their very purposes have been compromised and the construction of new water storage to continue to meet the needs of these regions is nearly impossible to achieve,” [said Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings](#). “Water users throughout the West have been forced to stand by and watch powerlessly as increasingly burdensome federal rules based on questionable science and never-ending litigation makes it more and more difficult to continue to receive the water they need.”

“The legendary multi-purpose dams and reservoirs of the last generation turned deserts into farmlands, created vast new recreational areas, tamed the environmentally devastating cycle of floods and droughts, and produced clean and abundant hydropower that provided a foundation for unprecedented prosperity throughout the western United States,” [said Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock \(CA-04\)](#). “This hearing will explore the

bureaucratic obstacles that federal agencies have placed in the way of water development. Congress must make a concerted effort to identify and remove these obstacles that lead to increasingly expensive water and power and affect our prosperity as a nation."

"Prudent water storage can help aid agriculture, residential use, recreation, hydropower production and environmental protection. Water storage is a precursor for multiple use water management in arid regions such as Colorado's third Congressional district," **said Rep. Scott Tipton (CO-03)**. *"I am hopeful that this hearing will be a productive step in highlighting some of the shortcomings of the existing water storage regulatory framework, and how it can be streamlined to better support jobs and communities that depend on the availability of water."*

"I commend the Subcommittee for holding this hearing to address water storage concerns. In my district water is a vital resource to our livelihoods, and we must ensure we have a reliable storage and conveyance system in place in order to spur job growth. I introduced bi-partisan legislation, H.R. 1604, to eliminate duplicative environmental regulations in California and alleviate burdensome policies restricting job creation," **said Rep. Jeff Denham (CA-19)**.

"Reducing the burdensome regulations that the federal government has imposed is critical to the vitality of our nation. The American people continue to be strapped by the bureaucratic layers of protocols and hindrances that continue to skyrocket our federal deficit," **Congressman Raúl Labrador (ID-01) said.**

Mr. Pat O'Toole, President of Family Farm Alliance, who represents family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and allied industries in seventeen Western states, testified about the importance of increased storage to agriculture and food security. *"There must be more water stored and available to farms and cities. Maintaining the status quo simply isn't sustainable in the face of unstoppable population growth, diminishing snow pack, increased water consumption to support domestic energy, and increased environmental demands,"* **said O'Toole**. *"If we don't find a way to restore water supply reliability for irrigated agriculture...our country's ability to feed and clothe itself and the world will be jeopardized."*

The Committee also heard testimony from [Mr. Thad Bettner](#), Clenn-Coulsa Irrigation District; [Mr. Norm Semanko](#), Idaho Water Users Association.

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