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Local Residents Stress Need for Congressional Action to Address California's Man-Made Drought

FRESNO, CA – Today, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power held a field hearing in Fresno, CA on “*Creating Jobs by Overcoming Man-Made Drought: Time for Congress to Listen and Act.*” At the hearing, Members heard first-hand from local individuals and groups who have been directly impacted by the deliberate diversions of over 300 billion gallons of water from San Joaquin Valley farmers in order to protect a three-inch fish.

This man-made drought has cost thousands of jobs, causing 40 percent unemployment in some communities, and has fallowed more than 150,000 acres of fertile farmland.

“There is no time to waste on reversing the plight of the San Joaquin Valley. The deliberate diversions by the federal government of over 200 billion gallons of water away from the breadbasket of America cost tens of thousands of farm workers their jobs, inflicted up to 40 percent unemployment rates in the region, fallowed more than 150,000 acres of the most fertile farmland in our nation, and forced up the price of groceries across the country. The facts we gather from this hearing will be instrumental as we begin the process to rescind government policies at the root of the San Joaquin Valley’s misery.” – **said Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman Tom McClintock (CA-04).**

Even though California has experienced near record precipitation this year, some farmers will still only receive 75 percent of their water supply. Witnesses and Members at the hearing warned that long-term solutions and increased water storage are needed in order to avoid devastating job losses in the future when there aren’t record amounts of precipitation.

“If it can happen here, it can happen anywhere. The San Joaquin Valley situation of the last two years should be a warning to us all that we cannot stand by for history to repeat itself. While Mother Nature has helped temporarily rescue this region with historic precipitation, a regulatory drought could re-appear if the rain and snow predictably disappear.” – **said Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).**

Witnesses at the hearing also stressed the social and economic impacts caused by a lack of water. Dayatra Latin from the Community Food Bank described the “endless” lines of people seeking food assistance in 2009 when communities faced record high unemployment.

“Reservoirs are in flood operations in California and still our state faces a man-made drought where fellow Valley farmers are not receiving all of the water they deserve. It was evident at the Water and Power Subcommittee hearing today that the environmental policies put in place by the Administration are destroying the Valley and new legislation is needed to rectify

the situation.” – said Rep. Jeff Denham (CA-19).

While the Obama Administration and the Pelosi Congress have done little to help the plight of San Joaquin Valley farmers, Republican Members of the Subcommittee vowed to take action to address the regulations that have caused this man-made drought.

“Today we had the opportunity to hear from people who have been victims of the man-made drought in the San Joaquin Valley. The days of senseless cruelty inflicted by valley Dustbowl Democrats and California’s two Senators is over. The House and Senate must act now. The time for studying and talking is over. Republicans in the House will take bold actions soon to restore water and prosperity to the valley. Senators Boxer and Feinstein must do the same.” – said Rep. Devin Nunes (CA-21).

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