

**Opening Statement by
Rep. Ken Calvert
Before the House Water and Power Subcommittee
Oversight Field Hearing on
*“Questionable Fish Science and Environmental Lawsuits: Jobs and Water Supplies at Risk in
the Inland Empire”*
Tuesday, October 18, 2011
Highland, California**

Mr. Chairman, I want to start by thanking you for convening today’s hearing. I’m looking forward to hearing from those that have come to testify about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s revised critical habitat designation for the Santa Ana Sucker. Specifically, I am concerned that the proposed designation may have devastating and long-reaching economic ramifications.

Just three years ago, the nation watched as California farms, and the tens of thousands of jobs they support, dried up in the Central Valley when the Fish and Wildlife Service cut off Valley farmers from their water supplies to protect the Delta Smelt. Today, Congress and community leaders are working to revive our economy and put Americans back to work and so we have all become more finely tuned and sensitive to impacts on the environment and jobs when new critical habitat designations are finalized. In the instance of the Santa Ana Sucker, the revised critical habitat designation affects an enormous urban population and its water supply. I am concerned that the revised critical habitat designation for the Santa Ana Sucker could become the Inland Empire’s “Delta Smelt” —and cripple our region’s economic engine.

It has been projected that by 2035 the Inland Empire’s population will increase by over 2 million people. To prepare for this population growth, local water agencies are undertaking major efforts to expand regional water supplies and replenish our depleted groundwater. According to some estimates, the Service’s critical habitat designation could mean the loss of almost 126,000 acre feet of local water every year. If this water could be replaced with imported water, it would cost the region an additional \$2.87 billion dollars a year -- a cost that will ultimately be passed on to working families and job creators in the form of ever-increasing water rates. However, given current limitations on pumping from California’s Delta the sad reality is this lost water may very well be irreplaceable.

Further, I am concerned with the Service’s decision to designate new critical habitat within the boundaries of the Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). When the Fish and Wildlife Service approved Western Riverside County’s HCP, the Service agreed not to designate any new critical habitat. In return, the County committed to creating a half million acres set aside for the preservation of habitat that hosts nearly 150 species residing in Western Riverside County.

By previously agreeing to implement the HCP, Western Riverside County was able to establish a plan for conservation balanced with a long term plan for urban growth and infrastructure

development. The plan had been designed to preserve native vegetation and meet the habitat needs of multiple species, rather than focusing preservation efforts on one species at a time.

Unfortunately, the Service's decision to designate nearly 3,000 acres of new land within the HCP breaks its agreement with Riverside County, threatens the continued successful implementation of the HCP and increases development and conservation costs. Without a strong landscape-level plan like the HCP to promote development and conservation side-by-side, Riverside's ability to build new infrastructure and promote business investment in the Inland Empire is stunted. I look forward to working with Western Riverside's HCP, local stake holders and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reach resolution for this issue.

Mr. Chairman, without a reliable supply of water, our cities cannot grow. Without roads and infrastructure to get our goods to market, our economy cannot grow and we cannot create jobs. Mankind has understood these basic concepts for thousands of years. However, today we are gathered to discuss a decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service that would disrupt both the economic prosperity and water supply of one of the largest urban populations in the United States. Their decision to expand the critical habitat into areas the Service previously deemed "not essential" when it first moved to protect the Santa Ana Sucker in 2005 requires close examination.

I agree that as Americans we must manage our native species so they thrive for future generations; however, I do not believe that managing America's natural resources and promoting America's continued economic prosperity are mutually exclusive.