

Testimony

Thank you, Ranking Member Westerman and members of the House Committee on Natural Resources for the opportunity to discuss the catastrophic drought situation across the American West. I want to thank our Congressman Tom McClintock for his unwavering leadership on these important issues.

My name is Tony Firenzi and I serve as Director of Strategic Affairs with the Placer County Water Agency. PCWA is the primary water resource agency for Placer County, California, with a broad range of responsibilities, including water resource planning and management, retail and wholesale supply of drinking water and irrigation water, and production of hydroelectric energy.

The source of PCWA's water supply is the American River watershed, where we have 340,000 acre-feet of reservoir storage. Our hydroelectric energy is delivered to the California grid. Our water is delivered to six cities and unincorporated areas of Placer and Sacramento counties.

This is an unusual year in hydrology for our region. Snowpack plummeted from 92% of normal in March to only 10% of normal in May. Soils were so dry that they soaked up the water before it arrived at our reservoirs. We are also alarmed by reports of forest fuels being even drier than last year in our watersheds located in the Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests.

We are suffering historically low reservoir inflow, receiving only a third of normal. This has a direct impact on our ability to put clean energy on the grid – this year we will produce about 325,000-megawatt hours rather than our normal million megawatt hours. The rest of the State's hydro-electric generators are similarly impacted.

Because of the size of our reservoirs, PCWA will be able to meet the needs of its customers this year. Water suppliers in the American River region have spent decades bolstering and interconnecting our water systems, so we are generally okay. However, our region believes that a healthy water supply runs through a healthy fishery. We are very concerned about adequate cold-water supplies for the local fishery on the American River.

As a region, we have green and gray infrastructure solutions that will address both human and environmental needs for water. We are well on the way, having spent more than \$500 million over the last two decades, but we still have that same amount left to build, and that is just projects within our watershed. In the next generation of projects, we are focused on innovative ways to store water – we need year-over-year wet storage, either above ground or underground.

These projects will help solve problems for humans and fish throughout the state – 90% of the water from the American River flows past Sacramento, on to the statewide water system. To

get these projects done, we need State and Federal funding and we need permit streamlining to expedite construction.