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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
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**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**On Wednesday, February 5, 2014**  
**1324 Longworth House Office Building**  
**Subcommittee on Water and Power Legislative Hearing on the H.R. 3980, H.R. 3981,**  
**and Discussion Draft**

Thank you, Chairman McClintock, for holding this important hearing.

Today's hearing represents a major step in advancing the need for new water storage.

For generations, legendary facilities like the Grand Coulee Dam have impounded water for multiple uses. Deserts became the most productive farmland in the world. Communities – rural and urban alike – sprouted up because of abundant water supplies and renewable hydropower. Cold water flows for downstream fisheries became year-round rather than seasonal. Ravaging flood cycles were tamed and water-based recreation allowed boats of all kinds to enjoy our western waters. These are just some of the benefits.

I've often talked about how our existing facilities have been undermined by litigious groups, judicial activism, environmental regulations not scientifically justified and bureaucracy run amok.

That remains today. One can only look to what's happening in California. When I lived in California as a young man, the Central Valley and State Water Projects played a major role in making California the Golden State. Now, the State is in the midst of an unparalleled and emergency drought situation. The lack of rainfall has caused this calamity but it has been exacerbated by federal regulatory actions that place the needs of a three-inch fish over people.

This is not only heartbreaking for those about to lose their livelihoods, but it's also an avoidable travesty. And, if it can happen in California, it can happen anywhere – even in the Pacific Northwest.

In my central Washington state district, the Yakima Valley is a poster child for needing new surface storage. Conservation plays an important part of meeting water needs in the Valley, but farmers, communities and environmental needs demand that we create new water. And, time and again, the numbers alone dictate the need for new storage. From day

one, I have supported efforts to build new storage in the Yakima Basin, and I commend and continue to urge forward the current integrated plan that is underway.

However, for new and expanded storage reservoirs to become a reality in the Yakima Valley and elsewhere in the West, there must a sea-change in how the federal government reacts to new storage. The current paralysis-by-analysis approach must be streamlined and we, as policymakers, must find innovative ways to re-invest in storage while adhering to the “beneficiaries pay” rule. That’s exactly what these bills before us do today.

I’ve taken the lead in sponsoring two of these positive solutions. The first introduced bill, H.R. 3981 would provide for the voluntary early repayment of existing federal water obligations by water users and the investment of these funds into a new account to be used explicitly for new and expanded water storage capacity. The second bill is a discussion draft that would dedicate a portion of existing authorized funding for the Bureau of Reclamation into the dedicated account for more storage. These bills complement each other and both are aimed at the same goal: identifying new sources of funds for new storage. In these fiscal times, it is going to require creativity and new ideas to achieve needed water solutions. This is true not just for more storage, but also for the corresponding commitments to habitat, efficiency, fisheries and other identified priorities.

The third bill by Chairman McClintock provides another common sense solution to help solve the challenge of new water storage by streamlining federal red tape and empowering the Bureau of Reclamation to facilitate timely completion of regulatory requirements.

I realize some may have reservations about these bills and they are entitled to their views. But, simply saying “NO” and believing in the status quo are not answers to meet the growing needs of the West. Without a doubt, conservation of our existing resources is a must, but it’s not a panacea. We cannot conserve our way to prosperity when we lose water to the ocean or don’t have any water to recycle. We need to create more water storage capacity in the Yakima River Basin, California and other areas throughout the West – not divvy up ever-increasingly scarce resources in times of changing weather patterns and growing human and species needs.

We have the power to continue our progress and that’s the purpose of these bills – to further build upon the premise of capturing water in wet times to provide for dry times.

Thank you

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