

**Subcommittee on Federal Lands**  
Tom McClintock, Chairman  
Hearing Memorandum

May 20, 2016

**To:** All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

**From:** Majority Committee Staff – Brent Blevins  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands, x 6-7736

**Hearing:** Legislative hearing on H.R. 5244 (Rep. Steve Knight), To provide for the establishment of a national memorial and national monument to commemorate those killed by the collapse of the Saint Francis Dam on March 12, 1928, and for other purposes.  
**May 24, 2016 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth HOB.**

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**H.R. 5244 (Rep. Steve Knight), “*Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act*”**

**Bill Summary**

H.R. 5244, introduced by Congressman Steve Knight (R-CA), creates a national memorial at the site of the Saint Francis Dam collapse in 1928 to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture. Additionally, the bill creates a 440 acre national monument that will encompass the national memorial. This bill was introduced May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

**Cosponsors**

Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA)

**Invited Witnesses**

**Panel I**

*The Honorable Steve Knight* (R-CA)

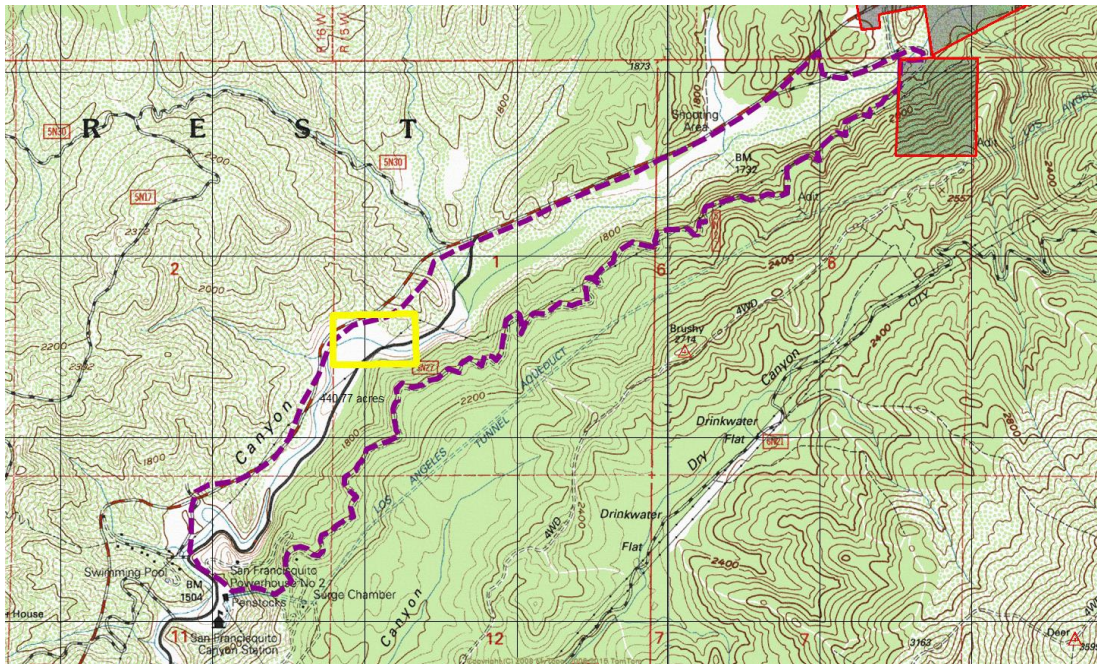
**Panel II**

*Mr. Brian Ferebee*  
Associate Deputy Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
Washington, D.C.

*Mr. Alan Pollack*  
President  
San Clarita Valley Historical Society  
Newhall, CA

## **Background**

The Saint Francis Dam was one of several large infrastructure projects constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to help control the flow of water to southern California. On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1928, the dam breached, resulting in significant flooding that took more than 400 lives in Los Angeles County, California.<sup>1</sup> This failure is considered one of the worst civil engineering failures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and resulted in the resignation of William Mulholland as head of the Los Angeles Bureau of Water Works and Water Supply.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the loss of life, thousands of residents lost their homes and experienced significant property damage due to the flood. Today, the site of the dam collapse and the affected areas are often subject to theft and vandalism.



The area in yellow is the site of the dam. The area outlined in purple is the proposed national monument.

## **Major Provisions**

H.R. 5244 recognizes the devastation of the flood and its impact on the residents of northern Los Angeles County by establishing a national memorial as well as a national monument to preserve the affected area for future generations. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the memorial via donation in consultation with the Santa Clarita City Council and the public. No taxpayer funds are authorized for the construction of the memorial.

The bill also authorizes the creation of a 440 acre monument (see map above) that will encompass the St. Francis Dam memorial. The boundaries of the memorial were designated in consultation with interest groups in the community. Motorized access will be allowed within the monument and grazing will continue to be allowed on any land where it is already permitted.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-stfrancis-dam-retrospective-20160319-story.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/occasions-i-envy-dead-st-francis-dam-disaster-180954543/?no-ist>

**Administration Position**

The Administration position is unknown at this time.

**Cost**

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.