

# Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman  
Mark-Up Memorandum

June 20, 2017

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff — Chris Marklund (x6-7736)  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Markup: **H.R. 2156 (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.  
**June 22 & 27, 2017; 1324 Longworth HOB**

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## **H.R. 2156 (Rep. Steve Knight), “*Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act*”**

### **Summary of the Bill**

H.R. 2156, introduced by Congressman Steve Knight (R-CA), creates a national memorial at the site of the 1928 Saint Francis Dam collapse 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 April 26, 2017.

### **Cosponsors**

Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA)

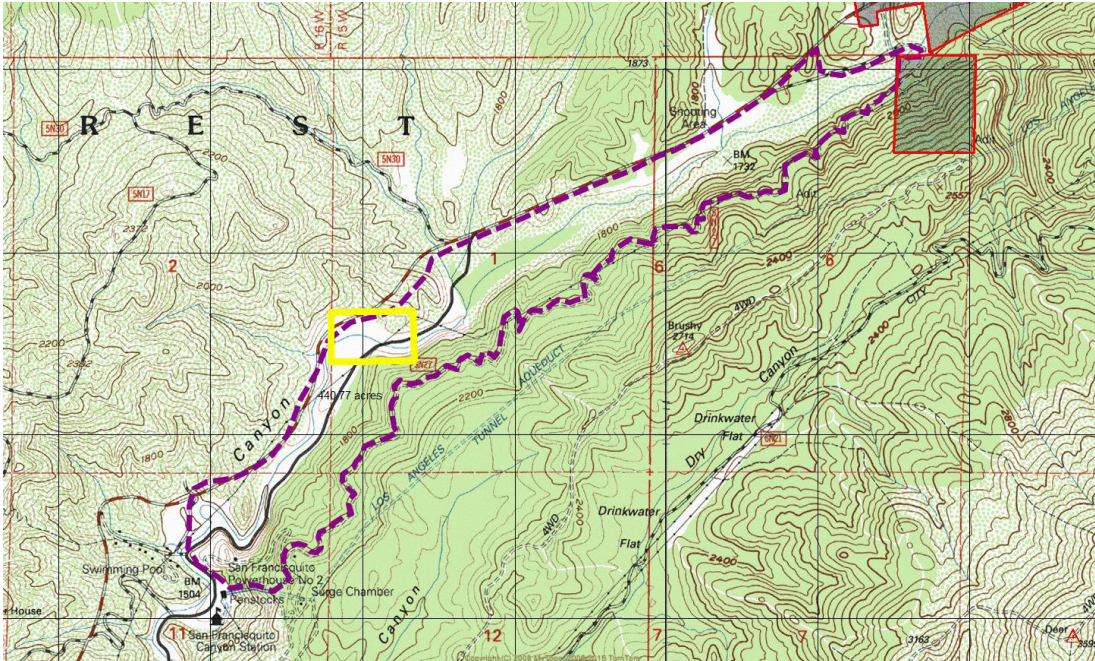
### **Background**

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Harrison, Scott. “California Retrospective St. Francis Dam Collapse Left a Trail of Death and Destruction.” *The L.A. Times* 19 March 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-stfrancis-dam-retrospective-20160319-story.html>

<sup>2</sup> Blitz, Matt. “On Occasions Like This, I Envy the Dead: The St. Francis Dam Disaster.” *Smithsonian.com* 12 March 2015, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/occasions-i-envy-dead-st-francis-dam-disaster-180954543/?no-ist>



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

### **Major Provisions/Analysis of H.R. 2156**

H.R. 2156 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.

### **Cost**

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate has not yet been completed for H.R. 2156. However, in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, a CBO cost estimate was prepared for substantially similar legislation, H.R. 5244, the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act. The CBO estimated the cost of implementing H.R. 5224 at less than \$125,000 over the period of 2017 to 2021. It was further estimated the net effect on direct spending would be negligible.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Budget Office, Cost Estimate for H.R. 5244 the Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Memorial Act, 28 June 2016. <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/costestimate/hr5244.pdf>

**Administration Position**

The Administration has not yet commented on H.R. 2156.

**Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)**

H.R. 2156 has no effect on current law.