

NICK J. RAHALL II, WV
CHAIRMAN
DALE E. KILDEE, MI
ENI F.H. FALOMAVAEGA, AS
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ
RAUL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
DAN BOREN, OK
GREGORIO SABLAN, MP
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM
BEN RAY LUJAN, NM
GEORGE MILLER, CA
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA
PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR
MAURICE D. HINCHEY, NY
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, VI
DIANA DeGETTE, CO
RON KIND, WI
LOIS CAPPS, WA
JAY INSLEE, WA
JOE BACA, CA
STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN, SD
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD
CAROL SHEA-PORTER, NH
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
FRANK KRATOVIL, JR., MD
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR

JAMES H. ZOIA
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement
Congressman Tom McClintock
Subcommittee on Water and Power
House Natural Resources Committee
July 29, 2010

DOC HASTINGS, WA
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER
DON YOUNG, AK
ELTON GALLEGLY, CA
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN
JEFF FLAKE, AZ
HENRY E. BROWN, JR., SC
CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS, WA
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
ROB BISHOP, UT
BILL SHUSTER, PA
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ADRIAN SMITH, NE
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
PAUL C. BROUN, GA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
MIKE COFFMAN, CO
JASON CHAFFETZ, UT
CYNTHIA M. LUMMIS, WY
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA
BILL CASSIDY, LA

TODD YOUNG
REPUBLICAN CHIEF OF STAFF

I applaud this hearing on expanding small hydropower development to augment our hydroelectric capacity. We will hear testimony today on the bureaucratic obstacles that federal agencies have placed in the way of the placement and construction of these hydro-electric generators, and I believe that Congress must make a concerted effort to identify and remove these obstacles that discourage development and drive up the price of electricity for consumers.

I am concerned, however, with an attempt to use the promise of small hydroelectricity projects as an excuse to delay, impede -- and among certain extremist groups, to destroy -- existing large-scale hydroelectric facilities.

One of the lamentable tendencies I have noticed in this Congress is to heavily subsidize those forms of water and power generation that are ideologically pleasing to the environmental Left while obstructing or even dismantling water and power generation frowned upon by the same extremist groups.

At these hearings, I have often reflected on the cornucopia of water and power that the federal government made possible when it maintained "abundance" as its central objective. The legendary multi-purpose dams and reservoirs of the last generation turned deserts into farmlands, created vast new recreational areas, tamed the environmentally devastating cycle of floods and droughts, and produced clean and abundant hydropower that provided a foundation for unprecedented prosperity throughout the western United States. As the legendary Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Floyd Dominy, once pointed out, a "Colorado River without dams is useless to anyone."

We must also beware of squandering our vast hydroelectric capacity by subordinating it to staggeringly more expensive and unreliable energy systems that the government is currently promoting. We will hear of the significant costs that are being incurred to supplement wind's notoriously unreliable nature. And we must also beware of unreasonable environmental requirements that are being imposed without any concern for costs or benefits.

For example, a concerted effort is being undertaken by this administration to destroy four hydro-electric dams on the Klamath River in the name of restoring salmon populations. This

effort is estimated to cost well over a half-billion dollars and will require consumers to purchase much more expensive replacement power for 155 megawatts of generating capacity – enough for over 150,000 homes.

One group that was invited by the majority to testify today has called this insanity a “model” for their next objective, the destruction of the four lower Snake River Dams.

The justification we hear is declining salmon populations. I asked why someone didn’t just build a fish hatchery. I was informed there was a major fish hatchery just below the dams called Iron Gate that produces over 5 million Chinook smolts each year that results in over 17,000 adults returning to spawn. But this abundant population is simply ignored in the salmon count.

This is utter lunacy.

On both large scale and small scale hydroelectric projects, we absolutely must restore some modicum of rationality and commonsense to our public policy.

We cannot continue to ignore our ability to restore endangered species populations through aquaculture, hydroponics and husbandry at a fraction of the cost, and on a vastly greater scale, than those measures now being imposed by current laws.

We cannot continue to allow endless litigation and regulation to inflate the price of water and power to the point that it is breaking our economy.

We cannot continue to indulge political ideologies while ignoring simple cost-benefit analyses in evaluating energy technologies and regulatory frameworks.

We cannot continue to impose increasingly Draconian rationing schemes on our besieged economy while ignoring our ability and our responsibility to produce a new era of abundance and plenty from our nation’s vast and renewable natural resources.

I applaud low-impact hydro-electricity where it offers cost-effective generating capacity and I believe we must identify bureaucratic impediments that are discouraging its use or inflating its costs.

But this should not be used as an excuse to impose additional impediments or costs on our large-scale hydroelectricity.

In short, we need to return to the time-tested policies that produced the era of abundant water and power that this generation has foolishly abandoned in favor of staggering costs, chronic shortages and bureaucratic rationing. I certainly hope that we do so before we completely wreck our economy.