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Opening Statement of the Honorable Tom McClintock
Subcommittee on Water and Power
Oversight Hearing on
The President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the
Bureau of Reclamation and USGS Water Resources Division
March 11, 2010

I'd like to express my concern from the outset that the Bureau of Reclamation is quickly becoming the Bureau of Water Shortage and Dam Destruction. The budget before us today is symbolic of that transformation.

The Bureau of Reclamation was established to "make the desert bloom." Today, it provides water to 31 million consumers, irrigates 10 million acres of farmland and provides enough clean, cheap and abundant hydroelectricity to power 3.5 million homes. It would take roughly 67 million barrels of heating oil or 21 million tons of coal to produce an equal amount of power.

Despite these successes, the agency's mission is being undermined by constant environmental litigation, a shift toward outrageously expensive urban water recycling programs and what can only be described as "analysis paralysis" when it comes to meeting the next generation's water needs through new dams, aqueducts and reservoirs.

In my home state of California we have watched as the San Joaquin Valley has been transformed back into desert by the diversion of over 200 billion gallons of water for the enjoyment of the delta smelt.

The Northern Sierra snowpack is now at 124 percent of normal, and yet the Administration has announced that it will guarantee only five percent of the west valley's water entitlement, with promises to increase it to all of 40 percent – maybe – in the future.

Farmers in the Klamath Valley in California and Oregon are now threatened with another complete shut-off of water for the amusement of the sucker fish.

While additional hydroelectric dams and reservoirs have been placed on a slow-track to nowhere, the fast-track has been reserved for dam destruction.

At a time when Californians pay the highest electricity prices in the continental United States, and officials can't guarantee enough electricity to keep our air conditioners running this summer, the administration is moving to fast-track the willful destruction of four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River that are producing enough electricity for more than 150,000 homes.

The agency has asked for \$5 million to begin the process to remove the dams, but continues to drag its feet on studying new water storage or hydroelectric generation.

I fear that this agency is becoming a pawn of the environmental Left and its crusade to crush the economy of rural America through the Endangered Species Act.

To make matters worse, we are told that ESA reform is not on the table despite the economic devastation that it is producing throughout rural America.

When we propose a new generation of fish hatcheries to assure abundant populations of salmon, for example, we're simply ignored. So we impose billions of dollars of new costs on our economy in the name of protecting a few hundred thousand salmon – when, for the cost of just \$13 million we could produce 170 million salmon each year – which is the inflation-adjusted cost and production output of the single Macaulley Fish Hatchery in Juneau.

This ideological fixation of the Left on creating and rationing shortages has to stop. We have it fully within our power to produce abundance in every field overseen by this sub-committee: abundant fish populations, cheap and abundant water; cheap, clean and abundant electricity; which in turn guarantees a thriving economy. That we fail to do so is a matter of choice and not of fate.

We need to put people back into the equation.

I hope that the testimony today will look to go beyond the same failed policy of managing shortages and instead lay out a bold vision of a new generation of hydroelectric dams, aqueducts, hatcheries and transmission lines to provide a brighter and more prosperous future for the next generation.

I have become accustomed to such hopes being dashed in this sub-committee, but as they say, hope springs eternal, and elections spring up every two years. These now chronic electricity and water shortages are not due to acts of God, but rather to acts of Government, and we have this consolation: that acts of government are always within our power to change.