

# Committee on Resources

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Congressman Joe Baca  
Opening Statement

Field Hearing, September 6, 2003  
Belen, New Mexico

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Buenos Dias. It is an honor to be here this morning, in my hometown of Belen, New Mexico. Even though I represent the 43rd District of California, I was born in this town not too many years ago. And I feel that I have the responsibility of being a guardian angel to Belen, otherwise my family members who live here may not claim me. I have been looking forward to participating in what I hope will be a productive hearing today to help solve a dilemma that has faced this area for a long time.

The conflict between the protection of endangered species and the needs of communities is nothing new. In my district in California, we have the endangered Delhi Sands flower-loving fly (recently named the Giant Delhi Sands flower-loving fly). In one of the fastest growing regions in the country, where 76% of the population are minority, we have had to stall commercial development to preserve "the fly." Now, they're talking about possibly importing 5.8 million pounds, or 120 truckloads, of rare sand to turn it into fly habitat. To me, this goes way beyond what the ESA was created to do.

Also, protection of the endangered Kangaroo Rat through the Fish & Wildlife Service has interfered with the business of a military base, and the water rights of water companies.

I understand that we have a duty to protect endangered animals and insects from extinction—but as public servants, we also have a duty to protect the welfare of the people who make up our community. Their needs should come first and foremost. And when you talk about water supplies in a State like New Mexico that already faces drought and limited water supply, these needs couldn't be greater.

I am confident that through the leadership represented here today, and the guidance of this Committee, we can meet in the middle to create a balanced plan that benefits the state's farmers, Pueblo Indians, and other citizens; and increases the state's water supply and the number of silvery minnow. I look forward to a constructive dialogue today as we listen to the witnesses and their valuable points of view.

Thank you.