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

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The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Water and Power
House Committee on Natural Resources
1522 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall and Chairwoman Napolitano:

In light of the direct relationship between job growth, public safety and the construction and use of traditional federal water and flood management infrastructure, we urge you to hold an oversight hearing on a troubling and recently proposed Obama Administration initiative that may hinder current and future water supply, navigation and flood control efforts.

Specifically, the Obama Administration's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has initiated a process to revise what is commonly known as the "Principles and Guidelines" that form the basis of water resources planning and public policies that influence the type, nature and specific features of federal water resources projects. These standards are critical in determining what and how federal decisions and investments are made in the development and management of our Nation's water resources. This Administration's effort has been implemented pursuant to Section 2031 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-114).

While no one disagrees that the law must be implemented, there are many questions why the Administration is seeking to expand its reach to include other agencies outside of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the role of these agencies in this process. There are also concerns that the first draft of this effort elevates the consideration of non-structural and environmental elements over economic and human benefits and safety in the planning phase of project development. Many believe that this supersedence was never the intent of P.L. 110-114.

For this reason, many western water interests who depend on multi-purpose Bureau of Reclamation facilities and irrigation projects are concerned that the Obama Administration's new draft standards will undermine efforts to rehabilitate current projects and that some future water projects will never come to fruition. The end result could mean that jobs are lost due to lack of construction and, more importantly, communities and their citizens will be threatened by natural and man-made disasters such as drought and floods that are avoidable.

We are not advocating for specific projects with this hearing request. We simply believe that it is possible to balance the needs of humans and the environment when it comes to protecting and promoting traditional water infrastructure (including dams, clean and emissions-free hydropower, irrigation canals, river navigation aids and levees). For over a century, these projects have provided benefits to millions of Westerners and affordable food for Americans nationwide. An examination of the impacts of the proposed Principles and Guidelines is not only necessary for these successes to continue but is one of the most important oversight responsibilities in this Congress.

For the sake of jobs, the economy, the environment, recreation, safe and affordable food, and the Western way of life, we hope that you will hold the hearing and consider having the federal government and non-federal stakeholders (including water and power customers) as witnesses so that we better understand how this inside-the-Beltway proposal impacts the daily lives of those we all represent.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources



Tom McClintock
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water and Power



Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests and Public Lands



Cathy McMorris Rodgers



Adrian Smith



Jason Chaffetz



Mike Coffman