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

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Tom McClintock**  
**Ranking Republican**

**House Water and Power Subcommittee**

**Field Hearing on "Managing Water for the Future: How Federal, State and  
Local Entities are Supporting Agriculture"**  
**Greeley, Colorado**  
**May 17, 2009**

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Today's theme, "How Government is Helping Agriculture," invites Reagan's answer: The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

Just a month ago, this committee held field hearings at the Grand Canyon, the principle object of which was to argue for additional water diversions to meet demands from environmental extremists and to put the richest uranium deposits in the United States off limits.

Just a year ago, the House majority passed legislation that, if enacted by the Senate, will order draconian reductions in so-called "greenhouse gases," including nitrous oxide -- which is the natural byproduct of producing nitrogen fertilizer upon which the entire agriculture industry depends. The impact of this legislation would also radically increase fuel and electricity costs -- two major components in farm operations.

And let's not forget the ponderous new mandate for businesses to purchase government-approved health plans for employees or face stiff fines.

If this isn't enough to cripple American agriculture, legislation is pending in Congress to regulate every small pond, irrigation ditch and seasonal body of water. Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency is pursuing greenhouse gas regulations that will apply to small dairy and beef cattle operations.

Ronald Reagan was right; Government isn't the solution to these problems -- government IS the problem.

Nowhere is the majority's command and control philosophy more clear than when it comes to federal water policy.

Our federal water policy used to promote abundance and economic empowerment by building water storage facilities that produced a cornucopia of cheap and reliable water and

hydro-electricity. These projects turned deserts into some of the most productive farmland in the world and created prosperity for urban and rural communities for generations.

Today, the current regime has abandoned abundance as the object of our federal water and power policy and replaced it with the rationing of shortages.

In California, we have witnessed the deliberate diversion of over 200 BILLION gallons of water from Central Valley Agriculture for the enjoyment of the "Delta Smelt." This committee could have acted to stop those diversions. It did nothing.

Let's be clear: Water conservation does not solve our water shortages. Only new dams and reservoirs can do that.

In this region, an organization called "Save the Poudre" recently said that Coloradans can "share the wealth of water we are already using on farms." I suppose that makes sense as long as you don't need to eat.

It is clear their objective is to restore our rivers to their prehistoric state. Unfortunately, that requires restoring our population and our standard of living to prehistoric levels.

History is screaming its warnings at us. Civilizations that produce water abundance prosper and flourish. Those that do not will wither and die. I challenge the majority right here and now to offer a single exception to that rule.

When I reflect on all the actions this Congress has recently taken to bring American agriculture to its knees, and then when I hear the smarmy assurance that we're here to help, I am again reminded of Tolstoy's indictment of the Czar's government. He said, "I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me and all the while I assure him and anyone who will listen that I am very sympathetic of his plight and willing to do everything I can to help – except by getting off his back."

This Congress and this Administration need to stop micro-managing every farm and ranch in the country and instead empower rural America by removing the impediments that have been imposed on land and water use, reservoir and hydroelectric dam construction, and human enterprise. Freedom works, and it is time we put it back to work.

We need to restore ABUNDANCE as the central objective of our federal water and power policy, and the minority party stands ready and eager to do so.