

**Written Testimony of Leslie A. Meyers
Associate General Manager**

Salt River Project

**House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Legislative Hearing**

on

H.R. 1607, To clarify jurisdiction with respect to certain Bureau of Reclamation pumped storage development, and for other purposes; H.R. 3027, Reclamation Climate Change and Water Program Reauthorization Act of 2032; H.R. 3675, To amend the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act to extend certain contract prepayment authority;

June 14, 2023

Chairman Bentz, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of H.R. 1607, legislation to clarify jurisdiction with respect to the development of pumped storage on the Salt River in Arizona. My name is Leslie Meyers and I am the Associate General Manager & Chief Water Resources and Services Executive at Salt River Project (SRP).

The Salt River Project (SRP)

SRP was formed at the turn of the 20th century to contract with the federal government for the construction of Theodore Roosevelt Dam, and other components of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project. SRP manages and operates seven dams and reservoirs throughout Arizona, along with 1,300 miles of canals, laterals, ditches, and pipelines to deliver water to approximately 400 square miles of land in the greater Phoenix area. The dam and reservoir system can store approximately 2.3 million acre-feet of water runoff from the Salt and Verde River and East Clear creek systems, making SRP the largest raw water provider in the Phoenix Metropolitan area.

SRP is also the third largest not-for-profit community based public power utility in the country, providing reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity to nearly 3,000,000 people in Arizona. SRP has a diverse energy portfolio that includes nuclear, solar and wind, natural gas, battery storage, coal, geothermal and hydropower.

Need for Energy Storage and System Operational Flexibility

SRP is making transformative changes to its power generation resource portfolio over the coming decade and beyond. In addition to incorporating 1,100 MW of new four-hour battery storage by 2024, SRP is also exploring long-duration pumped storage hydropower options. As more renewable resources are added to the power system to meet projected growth in energy demand, there will be an increasing need for a diverse portfolio that includes longer-duration energy storage capable of providing grid resiliency, that can store the large amount of solar energy generated during the day and provide reliable electricity in the evening hours.

SRP developed and operates 150 MW of pumped storage hydropower generation on the Salt River dam and reservoir system. For more than 40 years, these pumped storage facilities have provided reliable electricity and confidence that bringing additional pumped storage onto SRP's system will help meet changing customer preferences and needs. SRP has identified two sites adjacent to Apache Lake that can power the equivalent of up to 500,000 homes by storing solar and other energy during the day and delivering it during the evening. Each site would use an existing reservoir (Apache Lake) as the lower reservoir and require construction of a new upper reservoir. A 2014 Bureau of Reclamation study¹ (*Reclamation-Wide Pumped Storage Screening Study*) found that adding pumped storage to Apache Lake as a lower reservoir ranked 3rd out of 348 reservoir locations studied.

These facilities would help provide a portion of the long-duration energy storage while maintaining grid reliability and diversifying energy storage resources and supply chains. Leveraging the resiliency of SRP's existing reservoir system on the Salt River provides a reliable renewable water source for pumped storage operations even during severe drought.

History of SRP as a Reclamation Project & Associated Reclamation Withdrawn Lands

Congress and the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) authorized the construction of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project as one of the first projects under the Reclamation Act of 1902. The major dam sites, storage reservoirs, and hydropower generating facilities that SRP operates and maintains are located on National Forest System lands that Congress and the Secretary withdrew for the Reclamation purpose of storing water and generating hydropower for beneficiaries of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project.

Since 1903, Congress and the Secretary have withdrawn certain National Forest System lands on the Salt and Verde River and East Clear Creek watersheds more than 50 times to further these Reclamation purposes.

¹ Reclamation-Wide Pumped Storage Screening Study:
[https://www.usbr.gov/power/data/Pumped_Storage_Assessments/Pumped_Storage_Screening_Study_Report_\(Errata1_2\)_Sep_2020.pdf](https://www.usbr.gov/power/data/Pumped_Storage_Assessments/Pumped_Storage_Screening_Study_Report_(Errata1_2)_Sep_2020.pdf)

Purpose of Legislation

In 1905, Congress and the Secretary withdrew the majority of the National Forest System lands adjacent to Apache Lake where the two potential pumped storage sites are located. H.R. 1607 would extend this withdrawal by two miles to capture the upper reservoir sites and associated infrastructure to clarify that the Bureau of Reclamation has jurisdiction to evaluate the development of such facilities. Accordingly, the legislation would align the jurisdiction, planning, development, operation and maintenance of any such facilities with other facilities of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project including that: (1) the exploration, planning and development of such a project would be completed under Reclamation's jurisdiction rather than permitting processes under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations, (2) Reclamation would lead environmental compliance for the development of such facilities, (3) any such facility would be part of Reclamation's Safety of Dams Program, and (4) other uses on such National Forest System lands that do not conflict with Reclamation purposes could continue.

It is important to note that the legislation does not remove the need for federal and state environmental permitting and public input processes including but not limited to those required under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Tribal consultations, National Historic Preservation Act and Bald and Gold Eagle Protection Act.

Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of H.R. 1607. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.