

Chairwoman Grace F. Napolitano

Opening Statement: WP 3.11.10 Hearing

Good afternoon and welcome to all of our witnesses. Today we are meeting to review the Bureau of Reclamation and the US Geological Survey, Water Resources Division, Fiscal Year 2011 Budget requests.

Our meeting today is to provide oversight to ensure that the proposed projects of Reclamation and the USGS are supported by the Fiscal Year budget request. We are here to highlight budget questions and concerns. To perform our due diligence, it is necessary to question the logic and priorities, including the Secretary of the Interior initiatives, laid out in the budget documents. Together the US Geological Survey and the Bureau of Reclamation within the Department of the Interior provide critically important information for the people of the United States.

The US Geological Survey from its inception has followed a science-based path focusing on the collection of accurate water data. The USGS prides itself on being the preeminent physical and biological science data collector and information coordination in the United States government.

The Bureau of Reclamation began in 1902 with the mission of reclaiming the arid lands of the West for agriculture and societal growth. Reclamation evolved into one of the preeminent dam building and irrigation agencies in the world. The Reclamation of today is now tasked with trying to balance a wide spectrum of societal and legal responsibilities.

It is important to evaluate these budgets with an understanding that the West has a dynamic and variable water system and that large changes are on the horizon. It is well understood scientifically that increasing temperatures will have a significant impact on water supply. Since 1902 Reclamation has managed the hydrologic plumbing system of the West under the assumption that while there would be some variability in the annual hydrologic cycle, the overall average amount of water would stay the same. That assumption is being proven incorrect. Scientists from multiple academic institutions, government agencies and the National Academy of Sciences have concluded that warming temperatures will lead to changes in the water supply of the West.

In the 17 Bureau of Reclamation western states, the changing dynamic of increased water demand and decreasing supply requires a consistent and accurate assessment of water data. The fiscal year 2011 budget for the Bureau of Reclamation is approximately \$1.1 billion. Of this money, approximately 86 percent of it goes to discretionary authority and 14 percent goes to permanent funds and programs. Reclamation's FY 2011 budgeted supports the Secretarial Initiatives for WaterSMART; the Title XVI program; climate change and river basin studies under the SECURE Water Act; California water issues; and Native American water settlements.

We are especially pleased to see that funding is allocated for the Native American Affairs Program that will allow Reclamation to be at the table negotiating and implementing water settlements. This is a win-win for native and non-native neighbors that will result in improved water certainty.

The USGS plays a critical role in the collection and scientific safe-keeping of critical water information. The USGS's role in maintaining a viable gaging station network provides the

Nation with scientifically credible data and assessments so that water managers can make decisions. There is also no more important time than now to collect the data we need to make the policy decisions in the future. The USGS funding for water resources investigations is approximately \$229 million, supporting USGS gages and the Cooperative programs for water research. Without adequate and scientifically credible data it will be impossible to make good decisions both now and in the future.

We see progress in the Reclamation and U.S. Geological Survey budgets in addressing many of the key water issues facing the country. That being said, we still have questions as to how Reclamation and the USGS plan to integrate Secretarial Initiatives into their ongoing programs.

We have invited several stakeholders to the hearing today to discuss their collaborative role with Reclamation and the USGS. Water is a public resource that demands active and focused management. Developing and maintaining partnerships in the management, collection, and evaluation of water data is important if we are to provide accurate and appropriate information for decision-makers.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today, especially to Commissioner Connor and Deputy Director Larsen for taking the time to testify in front of this Subcommittee.