

1.25.10 Field Hearing, Los Angeles, CA

Chairwoman Grace F. Napolitano, Subcommittee on Water and Power

Opening Statement:

Water in California – either we have too little of it or too much. This past week has resulted in almost a year’s worth of rain. While the increase in our water supply is appreciated, it does not mean that our concerns over drought and how water is managed in California are over. Far from it. We are in the midst of a real challenge – increasing population, aging infrastructure, water supply restrictions, water quality concerns, environmental concerns the list goes on and continues to grow with each year. We are here today to continue a discussion about the California water situation. A water situation that over the past three years has been intensifying and reaching a boiling point. The dilemma we face in Washington is how can we work together to meet the challenge cooperatively and in a civil manner.

Management of water conditions in California is a cooperative effort – balancing between State, Federal and local suppliers. The resulting plumbing system is managed to meet the needs of over 30 million citizens who expect a good quality product to be delivered to them. Our desire here is to have a dialogue about how the water situation in Southern California factors into the states-wide

approach to addressing the larger drought issues and concerns. Everyone here today has a story to tell about how the drought has affected them or their constituents and likely all of you have suggestions for solutions. It is that dialogue about ideas and suggestions on how we can most effectively work together that we want to have today.

The importance of this discussion and why we are here in southern California is that the issue of water requires that we hear from all parts and constituencies. Developing a logical and doable approach to addressing the California water crisis requires a statewide coordinate approach. I believe we are seeing the manifestation of this in the California Legislatures efforts in November, the December Interim Federal Action Plan and last Septembers Memorandum of Understanding between the State and Federal agencies. These are all good efforts to bring direction and now need consistent and dedicated leadership to be successful. Independent actions taken without commitment will not result in long-term solutions.

There is no one silver bullet that will solve the hurt that many are feeling with the current water conditions. A couple of days of rain are certainly a nice relief but they are a reflection of weather impacted by variable ocean conditions and are not the long-term solutions to addressing the issues that underlie our water dilemma.

There has been a great deal of conjecture and a lot of one-way dialogue that the current water problems are due to the current regulatory environment. While making for interesting theatre they do not help in resolving the underlying problems. In a December 2009 Congressional Research Service report, CRS concluded that *“the current drought has created a fundamental shortage of supply. Regulatory or court-imposed restrictions, as well as the long-established state water rights system, exacerbate the effects of the drought for agricultural and urban water users”*.

The combined effect of the drought, the state water rights system, physical constraints of the hydrologic plumbing system, carryover surface and groundwater supplies, changing dynamics of climate, and legally mandated regulations for water quality and the environment all affect the delivery of water to the agricultural, urban and environmental systems of California. The issue is very simple – today our water management in California is supply limited. The challenge to all water users is how to adapt and mitigate to live within our water means and not have a reduction in service or have a loss in critical environmental services and water quality.

Some have questioned why we are having this discussion in southern California rather than further north. The answer is simple – the drought is a statewide concern and demands that all portions of the state be heard from. When

looking at the issue of water debate in California over the last 3 years, there have been numerous meetings, hearings, and discussions in northern California and the Central Valley. Curiously missing was hearing from the people and issues facing the citizens of Southern California.

Citizens in southern California feel the drought from both imports from the Colorado River Basin and from northern California. In southern California we are experiencing the near perfect storm of reduced supplies, increased demand from rising populations, and a steadily increasing complexity of legal, environmental and administrative requirements. The recent court decisions regarding the management of Colorado River water and the Quantification Settlement Agreement potentially throws years of negotiations and cooperation in jeopardy and with it water supplies for southern California.

Water is a basic human right. How many of us think about it the waters source when we turn on the tap in the morning to fill that coffee or tea pot? How many of us think about the journey that the drop of water takes as it moves from the Sierras or the Rocky Mountains to the reservoirs, the canals, the water treatment plants and the pipes in our houses or apartments? We take it for granted. The reality is as we are finding out is that quantity, quality and real time supply of water is critical to our health and well being. Every citizen in California deserves a clean and dependable source of water.

Today we are going to have three panels discuss three different aspects of the water issues in California. The first panel will discuss the federal and state approach to the current California water situation. This will include a discussion of California's state water plan, followed by a discussion of the November historic state water legislation. Lastly we have asked the Department of the Interior to discuss the Federal Water –Delta Water plan, the impacts of the recent QSA decision on Colorado River water supply and the role of water reclamation and reuse to supplies here in Southern California.

The second panel will focus on the issues associated with water delivery to the citizens of Southern California. This will include discussions about impacts associated with water delivery reductions from the two primary water supply sources of Southern California, imports from northern California and water supplied from the Colorado River system and the impacts associated with recent state court decisions and what constraints this puts on supplying water to the citizens of the southland.

The last panel will address the science and information needs that can help Federal, State and local water managers make better decisions, as well as help to identify specific –local and regional –impacts to urban water users, fishermen and farmers.

We will use today's hearing to discuss, listen, and hopefully learn about the water crisis in California and the efforts being made to address it. This discussion needs to occur now if we are to work together to implement real solutions. We have a challenge in front of us, and together I am positive we can figure out solutions.

With that said, I am pleased to now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Water and Power, Congressman Tom McClintock, for his opening statement.