United States House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano, Chairwoman

Written Testimony of Richard M. Moss, P.E.
In Support of HR 2498

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Washington, DC

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

I very much appreciate being given the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee to provide insight as to the need for HR 2498 and the water management planning it would provide. I am testifying today on my own behalf as a consulting civil and water resource engineer that has spent my entire professional career in the San Joaquin Valley assisting many water agencies and cities in their water resource planning. I am also here as a small citrus grower dependent upon local and regional surface and groundwater supplies to grow my oranges and mandarins and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners, a non-governmental, non-profit organization focused on the protection and restoration of native habitats, including wetlands, in the Tulare Basin portion of the San Joaquin Valley.

I am Richard M. Moss. I am a professional registered civil engineer and the Vice President for Water Resources for the engineering firm of Provost and Pritchard Engineering Group, Inc. with offices in Fresno, Visalia, and Bakersfield in the San Joaquin Valley. We hope to soon be expanding our offices to the more northern part of the San Joaquin Valley as we do have numerous clients in that part of the Valley as well. I have been in the consulting business for the past six years. Prior to that I was the General Manager of the Friant Water Users Authority for over 15 years. The Friant Water Users Authority is a joint powers authority formed under state law comprised of 25 member agencies that serve the irrigation water needs of approximately one million acres of the worlds richest farmland, receiving water from the Friant Division of the federal Central Valley Project (CVP). I have had the opportunity to testify before this Committee on a couple of occasions in my past capacity as General Manager of the Friant Water Users Authority.

I have had the great pleasure and a wonderful career of being directly involved in the water resource planning for much of the area to be directly benefited from the passage and implementation of HR 2498. I can attest to the benefits to be had from taking a more coordinated approach to such planning.

Overview of Integrated Regional Water Management Planning

The fundamental planning for the water resource needs of the San Joaquin Valley has been around for a very long time, including the notion of developing plans on more of a regional basis. Some of the earliest planning was done on the grandest of scale. For example, the planners of the CVP (originally conceived by the State and later assumed and carried out by the federal Bureau of Reclamation) laid out a project of statewide significance, importance and involvement. While the CVP has grown and expanded several fold in terms of its structures and its benefits, the earliest configurations of the CVP conceived of two large dams, one on the Sacramento River in the far northern part of the State and the other on the San Joaquin River in central California and a system of canals and water exchanges that could serve several million acres of existing and new farmland. The subsequent additions to the CVP, as well as the later development of the State Water Project, all involved water resource planning on a truly large, large scale.

However, since those early days of water resource planning and water development, most of the water resource planning has come as the result of addressing a specific need within a region (or more likely within a specific water district) and the planning has consisted of little more then developing a plan to implement a project to address a specific need. As water resource engineers, we were told that the era of big projects was dead and to focus our thinking on making better use of the resources that our forefathers had already developed.

We have now entered into yet another era of water resource planning. While for the first time in a long time there is active discussion of larger scale development of dams and conveyance facilities in the State, there remains the idea that before such new facilities can be constructed, or at least in conjunction with their construction, proof needs to exist that the existing water resources, as well as the proposed new water resources, are being optimally used and that the coalition of interests to be benefited by new water development needs to be very broad in nature; all with little or nor displacement of interests, obviously including environmental interests.

This idea of an integrated and comprehensive approach to water management planning, encompassing a variety of water management needs with the potential for a variety of entities which have water management responsibilities to engage, is thus a relatively new idea and has caught on with great fervor within California. The thought behind this approach is that, unlike traditional water resource planning documents, an integrated regional water management plan (IRWMP) does not focus on one – or even just a few – facets of water resource planning. Rather an IRMWP investigates a broad spectrum of water resources issues, involving diverse interests through public and stakeholder involvement and attempts to integrate multiple water management strategies to solve multiple priority challenges. By building a broader coalition in support of an array of projects, the hope is to leverage that regional cooperation to successfully address multiple water resource objectives. This approach can be especially effective if the principle state and federal funding agencies for such water projects support this approach and are willing to defer the prioritization of how the their money gets spent to the local planning interests.

At least some of the current focus on IRWMPs in California can be traced back to the development of the Santa Ana River Watershed Project in Southern California. This was a region rife with conflict over the management of their water resources and saddled with litigation that was costing millions of dollars annually to pursue with little in tangible results. After much struggle it was determined to address the various needs of the parties in a comprehensive manner and to try to do so using non-local financial resources. Their integrated regional approach, born out of conflict, has served as the basis for significant political will to address some pressing water resource needs. Their effort is now serving as the preferred model for addressing water resource issues where the need for assistance outweighs the ability of the state agencies to provide help and thus regional priorities need to be set; who better to set those priorities then the local folks.

The State of California has really been emphasizing the need for this kind of water resource planning. In 2002, the state legislature passed and the Governor signed into law the "Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Act," which lays out the legal basis providing for regional water management planning. Subsequently, the Californian Department of Water Resources prepared guidelines for the preparation of IRWMPs following the requirements of this law.

Then the State put money behind their intentions of emphasizing regional planning via the grant funding processes coming out of Proposition 50 (the "Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act") and Proposition 84 (the "Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act"), water resource planning and construction monies that were made available by general obligation bond acts. Being part of an IRWMP, or at least involved in the process of developing an IRWMP, is a prerequisite to receiving implementation grant funding under these propositions.

Some obvious advantages to planning water resource management on a more regional scale include:

- Addressing the apparent prerequisite for accessing future state grant monies for local water projects;
- Broader political support for multi-purpose projects;
- Packaging of otherwise single purpose projects together as a single multipurpose project and reaping the benefits of broader political support for everyone involved;
- Cost savings from development of multipurpose projects;
- Pre-mitigation of project impacts by packaging of multiple projects providing benefits to potentially impacted resources;
- Local setting of priorities to avoid competing projects at the regional level where competitive grants or funding is involved;
- Spreading the burden of grant application costs and other "front-end" costs associated with public works construction funding;
- Broader public involvement and awareness of local water issues and needs;
- Involvement and understanding of land use planners and decision makers on the regional availability (or lack thereof) of water supplies to support new development or the water related impacts of other land use changes;

- Urban constituency awareness of the local social and economic value brought by agricultural water agencies;
- Support from local advocacy groups due to their involvement in project formulation which lessens the opportunity for and effect of out-of-area advocacy groups;
- Development of inter-agency agreements for cooperation and service interconnection during drought of other emergencies.

Unfortunately, the San Joaquin Valley has been slow to embrace the concept of IRWMPs and as a consequence is behind much of the rest of the State in development of IRWMPs. This slowness is not a result of recalcitrance or of lack of water management insight. I believe it is largely a result of the diversity of underlying water and contractual rights, the diversity of kinds of projects and the nature of these projects serving the area, and importantly, because of the defensive posture that most of the San Joaquin Valley water community has been in relative to trying to protect their existing water supplies and unfortunately suffering significant reductions in those supplies. Having said all of that, a number of what I would term as "sub-regional" planning efforts have emerged and the level of communication and of activities to begin the development of a regional plan, or plans, is clearly catching hold.

The San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan

Congressmen Jim Costa, George Radanovich, Dennis Cardoza, and Devin Nunes initiated the development of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan almost two years ago. Congressman McCarthy has now also joined in support of the Plan's development. They could see the need for their constituents to work together in addressing the region's collective water management needs. The California Water Institute (CWI) at California State University, Fresno was asked to facilitate the regional planning effort. Development of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan was organized into four sub-working groups. The four sub-working groups were organized by four water-related needs within the region: (1) Water Supply, (2) Water Quality, (3) Flood Control, and (4) Environmental Enhancement. Members of the water community, representatives of industries and communities relying on water, and organizations dedicated to the enhancement of the environment populated the working groups. The working groups also included irrigation district managers, water agency members, water resource engineers, government officials, agribusiness representatives, public works managers, and environmentalists. I have personally had the opportunity to chair the Environmental Enhancement sub-working group.

Subsequently, Governor Schwarzenegger convened the San Joaquin Valley Partnership. The Partnership brings state agency secretaries and Central Valley representatives together to make recommendations to the Governor regarding changes that would improve the economic well being of the San Joaquin Valley and the quality of life of its residents, including recommendations regarding water resources. The 26-member Partnership, led by the Secretary of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, is composed of eight state government members, eight local government members and eight private sector members, along with two deputy chairs. With the comprehensive nature of the already started congressional regional water planning effort, the Partnership agreed to synchronize its water planning efforts with the ongoing process in its

development of the Partnership's water action plan and associated recommendations to the Governor.

The San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan under the leadership of the CWI has made good progress in identifying and polling the various interests of the region as to their water needs and the projects they believe are needed to meet those needs. This initial cataloging of the various interests, their needs and their projects was done on a shoestring budget and needs to be updated and further refined. The requirements of integrating the water planning requirements for the Partnership into the balance of the Partnership activities has also required the under-funded attention of the CWI staff.

Meanwhile, as noted earlier, sub-regional planning efforts have been started within a couple of watersheds in the San Joaquin Valley. They clearly are in need of help in integrating their efforts into a bigger regional plan. These efforts are typically being lead by agricultural water interests that have a limited perspective as to all of the needs of their area given they are largely in the business of supplying water to just agriculture. They have been struggling with how best to engage and address the other water management needs of their areas such as drinking water quality, environmental water needs, and flood control.

The Need for HR 2498

Others on this panel in support of this legislation will describe for you the water management crisis that is facing much of the San Joaquin Valley. Since the creation of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Planning effort by our four local congressmen, much has changed to lessen the reliability of water supplies for all users of water in the San Joaquin Valley. While the supplies and their reliability are shrinking, at the same time the demands for water, particularly clean drinking water, are increasing, as the region is one of the fastest growing in the State, if not the Nation. There are also many small, unincorporated communities that are struggling to provide clean, affordable drinking water. To try and tackle their relatively small (but hugely significant if you are the ones having to drink this water) problems community-by-community is nearly impossible. To plan and operate regional solutions for these problems, like regional surface water treatment plants, is clearly what is needed.

A lesser-discussed crisis is the one of the loss of wetlands in the San Joaquin Valley. Virtually all of the wetland loss occurred prior to the time when wetland protections came into being with the passage of laws such as the federal Clean Water Act. There are remaining wetlands outside of the state and federal refuges that typically are in private ownership. However, these wetlands are struggling due to the lack of available and affordable water supplies and are at risk to selling out to the development of other uses for these native habitats. Unfortunately, Tulare Basin wetlands have, until very recently, been ignored by the large-scale wetland protection and enhancement efforts such as those in the Sacramento Valley and elsewhere in the San Joaquin Valley. This is one of those "other water needs" that the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan has cataloged and is intending to address and to integrate into the solutions for the region's other water problems.

The need to coordinate the diverse and at times parochial water interests of the San Joaquin Valley is clear. The need for new, integrated solutions to the region's water problems is even clearer. The leadership of the State in partnering with the San Joaquin Valley to address its water needs as well as the other economic needs of the region is finally happening and is poised to make a real difference. The federal government has a real interest to see that this most productive agricultural region of the Nation continues to flourish and to move to a position of sustainability in the management of its water resources. We are in unprecedented times where we are faced with population increases, drought, climate change, endangered species issues, major river restoration programs, and the desire to maintain a certain way of life, that necessitates the need for a well thought out, comprehensive regional water plan. The passage of HR 2498 and the funding of the continued development of the San Joaquin Valley Regional Water Plan would be tremendously helpful.

In closing, let me extend my appreciation for the invitation to appear before the Committee today. I appreciate the efforts of our five local congressmen in sponsoring this legislation and for the Committee's consideration of its passage. Thank you.