

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 31, 2009

The Honorable Nick Rahall  
Chairman  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Ranking Member  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1329 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings:

Thank you for holding this hearing on the California drought, specifically focused on the actions by Federal and State agencies to address impacts on lands, fisheries, and water users. A hearing is very timely in light of the daunting impacts of what many have acknowledged to be drought conditions exacerbated by man-made legal and regulatory burdens.

This is not the first time our State has faced extended drought. The legendary Central Valley and State Water Projects were built to store and convey water as a way of overcoming drought and mitigating for groundwater overdraft. These projects have helped bring prosperity to our State, which despite the current economic challenges remains the eighth largest economy in the world and exports large volumes of specialty crops.

Despite these successes, our State is now in a water crisis of historic proportions because of the rigidity of federal laws like the Endangered Species Act which have taken away the flexibility to manage our water infrastructure system. A leading California water official, Mr. Tim Quinn, recently stated that "This is still a pretty decent drought but nothing unusual... We were prepared, as usual, for the drought, but they have taken all the tools away from us." Our State has led the way in conservation and water efficiency and will continue to do so. There are countless examples of water agencies, local governments and water users coming together to aggressively pursue reuse, reclamation and reliability. However, highly respected witnesses have testified before the House Natural Resources Committee time and again that these efforts alone cannot solve the California water crisis.

We hope today's hearing will yield significant progress toward finding short and long-term solutions. Hearing from governmental witnesses is important, but we urge the Committee to step outside the Washington beltway and hear firsthand accounts from citizens throughout California impacted by the drought. The Committee needs to hear from those in communities in dire need because of this regulatory drought. As such, we respectfully request that the Committee conduct a site visit or hold field hearings in places like Mendota, California, which is experiencing 40% unemployment due to water cut-offs associated with endangered species regulations. We strongly believe these hearings/visits will help the Committee gain a better

understanding of what people in the non-governmental world face in their everyday lives in these uncertain times and will better equip us all to enact policies to solve this problem.

We look forward to working with you on this request and thank you again for holding this hearing.

Sincerely,

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Kevin McCurt John Campbell

May Bono Mack Wally Herger

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