

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman, Energy and Water Development Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations

Hearing on the Bureau of Reclamation
FY 2015 Budget Request
March 26, 2014

I'd like to call this hearing to order. Good afternoon, everyone. Our hearing today is on the fiscal year 2015 budget request for the Bureau of Reclamation.

I'd like to welcome our witness, Lowell Pimley, Acting Commissioner of Reclamation. I have every confidence that Mr. Pimley's many years of experience with Reclamation will serve him well as he guides the agency's activities during the transition to a new Commissioner.

Make no mistake, though, it is a challenging time for Reclamation. We all know our infrastructure is aging – some of it getting quite old and beyond its design life – which means increasing maintenance and rehabilitation needs.

Funding necessary to meet our commitments under existing Indian Water Rights Settlements will continue to increase. And you might say it is in our best interests to hope for future settlements requiring funding as well, since the potential alternatives could pose serious consequences.

Funding levels devoted to large-scale ecosystem restoration – often associated with Endangered Species Act compliance – also seem to be increasing significantly.

The current drought across much of the West, but most severe in California, has put even stronger pressure on the many challenges inherent in trying to balance water needs. It has also highlighted both the great importance to our economy and the fundamental physical limits of our water resources infrastructure.

All of these important considerations, and yet Reclamation's budget has remained relatively flat for a number of years now. In fact, the fiscal year 2015 budget request before us today is actually a 6 percent reduction from the fiscal year 2014 enacted level, after accounting for the proposed shift of the Central Utah Project.

The agency continues to be expected to *do* more and more but without more funding. At some point, improving efficiencies just isn't enough.

It would seem we – executive branch and legislative branch together – have some tough decisions to make. Either we reevaluate the number and breadth of actions we promise to deliver or, if these really are strong national priorities compared to national priorities in other policy areas, we figure out a way to better reflect that in Reclamation's budget.

I look forward to discussing with Mr. Pimley the agency's view on how best to meet these many challenges.

Again, I'd like to welcome our witness to the subcommittee. Mr. Pimley, please ensure that the hearing record, questions for the record, and any supporting information requested by the Subcommittee are delivered in final form to us no later than four weeks from the time you receive them. Members who have additional questions for the record will have until close of business tomorrow to provide them to the Subcommittee office.

With that, I'll turn to Ms. Kaptur for her opening comments.

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