



Chairman Mike Simpson

*Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and
Related Agencies, House Committee on Appropriations*

FY 2016 Hearing - Bureau of Reclamation

February 12, 2015

Opening Statement As Prepared

I'd like to call this hearing to order. Good morning, everyone. Our hearing today is on the fiscal year 2016 budget request for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Our witness is the new Commissioner of Reclamation, Mr. Estevan López. I'd like to first congratulate you on your confirmation and also welcome you to the House Energy and Water Subcommittee. I look forward to working with you on the very important issues facing the Bureau of Reclamation. Your extensive experience with Western water issues should serve you well as you take on this new role.

My next comments may sound familiar to those who've been here in previous years, but since this is Commissioner López's first time before the Subcommittee, I think the message bears repeating.

The fundamental challenge facing Reclamation is that the agency continues to be expected to do more and more with less and less. That challenge holds true for both water and funding.

The population of the Western States continues to grow, which impacts the amount of water needed for public consumption and increases demand for the electricity generated by our hydropower facilities. New environmental requirements, or new interpretations of old requirements, have increased the amount of water directed towards restoring fish runs and habitat areas. Yet the current drought reminds us that water supplies are not limitless and that we need to be mindful of how we prioritize its use.

As for funding, Reclamation's budget has remained relatively flat for several years now, while the increasing costs of an aging infrastructure, Indian Water Rights Settlements, and large-scale ecosystem restoration – often associated with Endangered Species Act compliance – compete for limited resources.

It would seem we – executive branch and legislative branch together – have some tough decisions to make. We must reevaluate the number and breadth of actions we promise to deliver and ensure that the funding provided is directed to the activities that will bring the greatest benefits to the nation. I look forward to discussing with the new Commissioner how the federal government might address these many concerns.

Again, I'd like to welcome him to the subcommittee. Commissioner López, 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 Monday to provide them to the Subcommittee office.

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