

Statement by the Honorable David Valadao, M.C.
Before the House Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2749

June 25, 2015

Thank you for holding this hearing on my bipartisan bill aimed at bringing more water to the San Joaquin Valley and other parts of the West. I want to thank my Democratic colleague Jim Costa and Senator John Barrasso of Wyoming for working with me on this legislation.

As we all know, California is facing its fourth year of consecutive drought. Water curtailments are at an all-time high and some communities are completely out of water. It is estimated that over 620,000 acres of land are to be fallowed in California this year, predominantly in the area that I represent. Our constituents across the Western United States are in desperate need of water for their families, crops, and day-to-day life. While we strive for immediate solutions it is also important to look towards the future and develop long-term strategies to overcome drought. We have the capability to capture more water in wet years to get through dry times and we owe it to the hard-hit communities of the San Joaquin Valley to leave no rock unturned.

For this reason, I introduced the *Dams Accountability, Maintenance, and Safety* (DAMS) Act. This bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate additional actions – such as a small dam height increase – when it studies and conducts necessary repairs at the same dam. Under current law, if a modification or repair is identified by the Bureau of Reclamation during its “Safety of Dams” process, the Secretary is authorized to look only at repairs that will remedy the specific problem. H.R. 2749 authorizes the agency to evaluate multiple dam improvements, including adding more storage, if certain criteria are met. This is equivalent to adding a window to your roof while you are replacing the shingles on your house. This bill is also about government efficiency and cost savings - instead of having to conduct separate studies at separate times at the same facility, the agency can consider additional modifications simultaneously, saving the taxpayer money.

This Subcommittee is privileged to hear today from Mr. Jon Rubin, General Counsel to the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority (Water Authority), on the bill. Mr. Rubin served as outside Counsel for almost 14 years before joining the Water Authority in 2012 as General Counsel. The Water Authority serves 28 member agencies that deliver water to approximately 2 million Californians residing in communities ranging from small, rural, and often disadvantaged towns to major cities in the Silicon Valley. The Authority manages B.F. Sisk Dam, also known as the San Luis Dam, which could benefit from this bill.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for having a hearing on this bill. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues to advance this common-sense, bipartisan bill.