

Opening Statement
The Honorable Paul Gosar
Vice-Chair
House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee
Oversight Hearing on
***"The 2016 California Water Supply Outlook During the El Niño and Three Years of
Restricted Water Deliveries"***
February 24, 2016

Today's hearing is about bringing sanity back to our federal policies that have put thousands out of work and fostering accountability to the Endangered Species Act and the bureaucracy charged with implementing it.

The Bureau of Reclamation's multi-purpose water projects made the West what it is today. Generations of our prior leaders focused on the need to capture water and deliver it to cities and fields. These were non-partisan endeavors – as evidenced by this video of President John F. Kennedy dedicating San Luis Dam in California (play 30 second video)

While the Central Arizona Project came after President Kennedy, it continues to bring prosperity to Arizona's cities, tribal communities and ranches almost fifty years from its inception. The Glen Canyon Dam and other projects affiliated with the Colorado River Storage Project provided the backbone of a regional economy that produced year-round water and emissions-free hydropower. Lake Powell, the reservoir behind Glen Canyon allows for millions of dollars worth of recreational boating annually and even provided the scenery for the astronaut crash landing in the 1968 science fiction classic, the Planet of the Apes.

For years, those bent on destroying the Glen Canyon icon tried the frontal assault by trying to get it torn down. The so-called environmental community has gotten much more creative by actively litigating against dams and the federal agencies that operate them with the goal of making them effectively useless. This is happening with the very dam that we just heard John F. Kennedy dedicate.

The litigation tool in this case has been the Endangered Species Act and the little three-inch fish called the Delta smelt. Biological opinions challenged by the environmental litigation industry were made even worse by court actions and federal agencies terrified of further litigation. These federal plans have created a situation where communities who thought they were going to get more water in an El Nino year are now faced with potentially less water than last season's dry year. Meanwhile, federal scientists have already killed at least 120 Delta smelt than the equivalent of 12 impacted by the Delta pumps this year alone – or 10 times more – and double the amount of water is being released to the ocean compared to last year. This begs the question of who's being accountable.

If it could happen in California, it could certainly happen in Arizona and elsewhere. Our Nation's forefathers had the vision and leadership to construct water and power projects that brought promise and hope to a desert wasteland. We are now watching those projects and the communities that rely on them being killed by a thousand cuts. Rationing is now standard practice almost everywhere and the wasteland is slowly returning. That needs to change.

And that's why this House passed comprehensive west-wide drought relief legislation last year. It helps California, but it also helps the entire West by ending paralysis-by-analysis through regulatory streamlining to build more water storage, protecting state water rights and allowing water users to pre-pay what they owe to the federal government.

This effort was four years in the making and now we have a chance to get it and other policies over the finish line so that we can start returning to a policy of abundance. This hearing is a part of that long-term goal but it also serves as an immediate step to help those most in need in California. I welcome our panel of witnesses today and look forward to today's hearing.