

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Doug Lamborn (R-CO)**  
**Chairman**  
**House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee**  
**Legislative Hearing on HR 4419 (Newhouse)**  
***“Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Indian Affairs Water Project Streamlining Act”***  
**November 30, 2017**

Today we will consider H.R. 4419, the “Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Indian Affairs Water Supply Project Streamlining Act” sponsored by our colleague from Washington State, Dan Newhouse. This bill further advances this Subcommittee’s agenda of an “all-of-the-above” water supply strategy.

Since its inception more than 100 years ago, the Bureau of Reclamation has built more than 600 dams and reservoirs. These facilities have allowed the arid West to flourish, because a prior generation had the vision and willpower to store water when it is available and deliver it during dry times. These multi-purpose facilities provide Coloradoans and the West with numerous benefits including recreation, flood control, hydropower, and a reliable water supply. In addition, these facilities provide cold water for ESA-listed fish species and other environmental benefits. Similarly, BIA Indian irrigation projects are comprised of the water infrastructure needed to ensure that tribes have access to reliable water supplies for both human consumption and irrigation.

For generations, water users and tribes throughout the West have depended on these projects, and they will continue to do so for decades to come. The problem, however, lies in the fact that many of these facilities are aging and it is getting increasingly more difficult to build new projects. With few exceptions, Reclamation has not built any new large, multi-purpose dams and reservoirs over the last generation. Coupled with rapid population growth and the regions susceptibility to droughts and water shortages, our current infrastructure is inadequate to meet a growing demand for a finite supply of water.

For years, this subcommittee has heard from witnesses how regulatory hurdles in the form of never-ending feasibility studies and environmental reviews has stifled the development of new water projects like the Sites Reservoir in California which – at one point – had 52 potential Reservoir locations being considered.

Mr. Newhouse’s bill, HR 4419, represents a commonsense approach to reform and streamline the feasibility study process for future water projects in order to tackle the seemingly endless “paralysis-by-analysis” status quo. This bill requires the Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Indian Affairs to become more transparent and accountable in how they evaluate future water projects.

This bill aims to not only promote the development of new surface storage, but also pave the way for rural water, Title XVI (16), Indian irrigation and other federal water projects to get built in a predictable and timely manner. Furthermore, it creates a new process that will allow these agencies to identify and transmit potential projects to Congress to review and authorize. It

is based on the precedent included in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act, which gave the Army Corps. of Engineers this process, and passed the House with a vote of 412-4 in 2014. We must give Reclamation and the BIA similar tools to get projects built, and that is exactly what this bill does.

Before I conclude, I want to make it crystal clear that nothing in this bill undercuts public input, the National Environmental Policy Act or any other environmental requirements. To the contrary, it actually allows the environmental benefits associated with these projects to be developed and put into action more expeditiously. It simply requires federal agencies to work together, adhere to reasonable timelines with ample opportunities for extensions as long as they can justify why it is needed.

This bill provides water users with the certainty needed to pursue and invest in these projects by breaking down the barriers that have stifled new water project development in America. We need to get serious about our water future, and this bill is a step in the right direction. Let's ensure that future generations have access to the same benefits and resources that past generations gave to us.

I thank our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to hearing from each of you.