Opening Statement

Thank you everyone for joining us today for an important hearing examining the state of water supply reliability in our nation.

As I mentioned at our last "WOW" hearing, one of my goals this Congress is to work to reset the factual and scientific baseline for natural resources issues in this Subcommittee's jurisdiction through what I informally refer to as "WOW 101."

Finding consensus on tough issues is a formidable task. But I believe we can make progress on that front if we can develop a common understanding of the baseline facts and science before jumping right into the most contentious policy debates. That's why we're having these 101 hearings.

I am also personally meeting with every member of this Subcommittee, on **both** sides of the aisle, to solicit feedback and explore areas where we can work together. I truly believe there are good ideas on both sides of the aisle. And I'm hopeful that this Subcommittee can work together to disprove that old notion

that “water is for fighting over,” and instead work to come up with common-sense, scientifically-based solutions to the challenges before us.

So, let’s get started. Today we’ll be looking at the state of our nation’s water supply and the water supply challenges we’ll face in the 21st Century.

As many here know, the Western United States has been suffering from frequent and increasingly severe drought in recent years.

- For example, in my home state of California, we recently emerged from the state’s worst drought in 1,200 years, according to some scientific reports.

- In the northern Great Plains, we recently experienced an extreme drought that NOAA categorized as a “billion-dollar disaster.”

- And the Colorado River – which supplies water to 40 million people and 5.5 million acres of farmland in seven Western

states and Mexico – is currently going through its *nineteenth* year of drought, with no end in sight.

Today, we'll hear from witnesses about the specific challenges caused by these water shortages.

- We'll hear today from community voices about what happens when rural communities literally run out of water for basic human needs because of drying wells.

- We'll hear how water shortages have impacted coastal communities and thousands of fishermen. In my district and along the Pacific Coast, fishing families have been dealt multi-million-dollar blows in recent years because of water shortages that have battered our fisheries.

- We'll also hear about the great costs of water shortages to agriculture, cities, tribes, and Western states.

And finally, we'll hear today what the science says about how climate pressures will make our water challenges more difficult

in the future. Climate pressures – including warming temperatures, shrinking snowpack, more volatile precipitation, and rising seas, to name a few – will reduce our water supply and impact millions of Americans. It's important that this Subcommittee soberly assess and plan for these challenges.

Part of that planning requires a thoughtful evaluation of policy options. I look forward to a thorough examination of the policy options that this Subcommittee can pursue to promote water supply reliability now and in the years to come.

One policy option that we'll all hopefully agree on is the need to invest in our water infrastructure. Much of our existing water infrastructure is nearing the end of its design life and is in great need of maintenance and repair.

Last Congress, I worked across the aisle with Representative Gosar on a bill that would regularly require the Bureau of

Reclamation to assess and publicly disclose major repair and rehabilitation needs for Reclamation water projects. That bill recently passed the Senate as part of the omnibus public lands package, and I think it is a good first step in working across the aisle to address our repair and maintenance needs. I hope we see it move through the House and signed by the President soon.

I'll also commit to work across the aisle on other areas of bipartisan agreement – such as the need to construct new water infrastructure to grow our water supply. That new infrastructure can include a variety of projects, including smart storage, water reuse, desalination, and water-use efficiency projects. It's imperative that this Subcommittee work on these kinds of common-sense projects that will promote water supply reliability for all stakeholders.

So, to conclude, I look forward to using my role on this Subcommittee to evaluate and address our water challenges in a

deliberative and open way. Communities need clean water to drink. Farmers need water to irrigate their crops. Fish and wildlife and the people whose livelihoods depend on them need water to survive and thrive. This Subcommittee will work hard to ensure water supply reliability for all of these important stakeholders.

Ranking Member McClintock, I hope we can find opportunities to work together to get things done. While we may have some differences in outlook, there are many common-sense solutions that Republicans and Democrats can pursue on this Subcommittee, and I hope you'll join us in that effort.

Finally, I would like to welcome members of the Association of California Water Agencies in the audience today – we look forward to hearing from you and working with you as well to promote water supply reliability.

With that, I want to invite the Ranking Member to say a few remarks, and then we will welcome and introduce our witnesses.