

## **Opening Statement**

**[744 words, ~4.5 minutes]**

Thank you for joining us today. We're here today to consider four bills that aim to tackle a variety of water challenges driven by climate change.

As we continue to hear on this subcommittee, climate change is greatly impacting water supplies for numerous American communities and imperiling our nation's ecosystems. To respond, we must advance new tools and investments in climate resilience and adaptation measures. We'll hear about some of those tools and investment needs today.

The bills before us today propose new tools to support reliable, clean drinking water for tribes, increase access to critical climate and water data, and advance collaborative solutions for endangered species recovery in the drought-stricken Upper Colorado River Basin.

The first item on our agenda today is House resolution 320 sponsored by Representative Joe Neguse of Colorado.

This resolution recognizes the critical importance of access to reliable, clean drinking water supplies for Native Americans and Alaska Natives and calls upon the federal government to take certain actions to ensure basic water services across Indian Country.

Numerous tribal communities across the country lack reliable, clean drinking water supplies, even though the federal government has a trust responsibility to ensure the survival and welfare of Indian tribes and people. Despite this, Native American households are still 19 times more likely to lack complete plumbing than white households in the United States.

Lack of water is having significant impacts on tribal economic development and public health, including higher rates of death and hospitalization from COVID-19.

Clearly, the federal government can and must do better—including by employing a “whole of government” approach to remove barriers and optimize funding for basic water service—which resolution 320 calls for.

I look forward to continued discussion on Rep. Neguse’s resolution and how Congress can better support tribal water access.

Also from Representative Neguse, we’ll consider H.R. 5001, the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Recovery Act.

This bill would reauthorize two collaborative programs that help recover four endangered species within the Upper Colorado River and its largest tributary, the San Juan River.

These programs bring together water users, environmental groups, tribes, local utilities, and state and federal agencies to recover endangered fish while continuing to manage water in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

These recovery programs have resulted in significant progress toward species recovery, including through the removal of nonnative species and by providing enhanced flows at key times for the species.

I want to commend Representative Neguse for his leadership on both of these bills.

Next, we'll consider H.R. 4832, sponsored by Representative Susie Lee of Nevada, the Open Access Evapotranspiration *[pronounced evap – o – trans – pir – ation]* Data Act.

Data on evapotranspiration, or “ET,” can be used to determine how much water is lost to the atmosphere. Better data on ET will help inform water management and improve climate planning efforts.

H.R. 4832 would establish a program within the U.S. Geological Survey to provide satellite-based ET information to inform water management. Several witnesses at our recent hearings on Colorado River drought conditions expressed support for such efforts, noting that ET data is particularly important for improved and transparent monitoring of water use.

It is critical to have adequate water data to properly manage our increasingly limited water resources, and I’m glad to join Representative Susie Lee as a cosponsor in this effort.

Our final bill for today is H.R. 5345, the Saline Lake Ecosystems in the Great Basin States Program Act, which I am proud to cosponsor.

Saline lakes in the West are shrinking and becoming saltier due to prolonged drought and other effects of climate change. These shrinking lakes are exposing harmful dust that threatens the public health of neighboring communities, harms local economies, and eliminates essential habitat, including for numerous migratory birds.

H.R. 5345 directs the U.S. Geological Survey to establish a program to assess and monitor the hydrology of saline lakes and associated ecosystems in the Great Basin states. This effort will help us better understand how water supplies and habitats are changing and inform better management actions in response.

I want to applaud Rep. Moore and the many stakeholders who worked on this collaborative legislation, including The National Audubon Society, which first identified how western lakes are serving as a vital link on migratory pathways for numerous species.

With that, I look forward to a productive conversation today about each of these bills, and I will now invite Ranking Member Bentz to say a few words.

**Ranking:** *[OPENING STATEMENT]*

[Recognize Ranking Member Westerman, if attending]

I also understand that the Full Committee's Ranking Member, Mr. Westerman, is here. Ranking Member Westerman, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ranking Member Westerman's Opening Statement]

Thank you, Ranking Member Westerman.