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**Testimony of Mr. Greg Krzys**  
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**Before the United States House of Representatives**  
**Natural Resources Committee**  
**Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee**  
*Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4970, the Orland Project Water Management Act*  
**September 3, 2025**

Chairwoman Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.R. 4970, the *Orland Project Water Management Act*, introduced by Congressman Doug LaMalfa. My name is Greg Krzys, and I am the General Manager of the Orland Unit Water Users' Association (OUWUA).

The Orland Unit Water Users' Association represents the water users served by the Orland Project, the oldest federal reclamation project in California. The Orland Project was authorized by the Interior Secretary in 1907 under the Reclamation Act of 1902 and began delivering water to 20,000 acres of farmland in Glenn County in 1910. The project consists of two dams (East Park and Stony Gorge), 17 miles of canals, and 139 miles of laterals, serving agricultural operations that are vital to the economy of the northern Sacramento Valley.

The Orland Project draws its water supply from Stony Creek, which is fed by local precipitation and is hydrologically independent from the watersheds that supply the Central Valley Project (CVP). This independence, while providing some operational benefits, has created a significant limitation under current federal law that H.R. 4970 seeks to address.

### **The Problem**

Under existing law, specifically the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991, water can only be transferred from the Orland Project to CVP contractors when the Governor of California makes a request for temporary drought assistance. This restriction is problematic for several reasons.

First, the Orland Project has surplus water available for transfer approximately 90% of years, regardless of drought conditions. Our estimates indicate that in recent years, approximately 5,000 acre-feet annually could have been made available as surplus, with up to 10,000 acre-feet in wetter periods. This represents water that could serve beneficial uses but instead remains stored until the end of the irrigation season and is then released to create reservoir storage for winter storm events.

Second, the hydrological independence of the Orland Project means that our water availability does not always align with drought conditions in the broader CVP system. We may have surplus water available when CVP contractors are facing shortages, but current law prevents us from making those transfers except under very limited circumstances.

Third, this unused water represents a missed opportunity for enhanced water supply reliability and groundwater sustainability in the region. The Tehama Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA), which serves more than 156,000 acres, including subsidence-prone areas near Arbuckle and Orland/Artois, faces increasing pressure under California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act to reduce groundwater overdraft. Additional surface water supplies from the Orland Project could help meet these sustainability goals.

### **The Solution**

H.R. 4970 provides a straightforward solution by amending the 1991 Act to allow the Secretary of the Interior to make Orland Project water available to the Sacramento Canal Unit of the Central Valley Project at any time, without regard to water year type, upon request of the OUWUA, and if the Secretary determines such action is consistent with the purposes of the Central Valley Project.

This change would provide several important benefits:

1. **Enhanced Water Supply Flexibility:** The legislation would allow surplus Orland Project water to be put to beneficial use rather than being spilled ahead of winter storms, creating new water supplies for CVP contractors.
2. **Groundwater Sustainability Support:** By providing additional surface water supplies to CVP contractors, the bill would reduce pressure on groundwater resources and support compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.
3. **Economic Benefits:** The legislation would support agricultural operations throughout the region by improving water supply reliability and creating opportunities for conjunctive use and groundwater recharge programs.
4. **Operational Efficiency:** The bill would eliminate bureaucratic barriers that currently prevent efficient water management and allow for more responsive transfers based on actual hydrological conditions rather than emergency declarations.

### **Addressing Concerns**

The surplus water we are discussing consists primarily excess, unused summer supply that will be released to gain flood storage space or spills during winter storms. This excess supply provides minimal incremental recharge benefit down the creek during late fall and winter months. Against the backdrop of Stony Creek's annual average flow of approximately 450,000 acre-feet, the surplus water volumes we are discussing are de minimis in terms of system-wide winter recharge impacts.

More importantly, using this water during the summer to meet irrigation demand reduces the need for local groundwater pumping, which provides a more effective groundwater management

benefit than releasing it downstream as spill water. The bill enhances recharge opportunities basin-wide by supporting surface water deliveries across TCCA's much larger service area.

### **Legislative Safeguards**

H.R. 4970 includes important safeguards to protect existing water rights and prevent unintended consequences. The legislation specifies that transfers must be consistent with CVP purposes, requires OUWUA approval, and includes rules of construction that protect existing water rights and prevent redirected impacts to the Orland Project.

### **Conclusion**

H.R. 4970 represents common-sense water policy that will enhance water supply reliability, support groundwater sustainability, and improve the efficient use of existing water infrastructure. The legislation removes an outdated restriction that prevents beneficial use of available water supplies while maintaining appropriate oversight and protections.

The Orland Unit Water Users' Association strongly supports this legislation and appreciates Congressman LaMalfa's leadership in addressing this longstanding issue. We believe H.R. 4970 will provide meaningful benefits to agricultural communities throughout the northern Sacramento Valley while supporting California's broader water management and sustainability goals.

I thank the Subcommittee for considering this important legislation.