

**Statement for the Record  
Department of the Interior  
Before the  
House Natural Resource Committee  
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries  
On**

**H.R. 7287, Lewis and Clark Regional Water System Expansion Feasibility Study Act; H.R. 7331, Dakota Mainstem Water Supply Project Feasibility Study Act; H.R. 8259, Reclamation Project Consultation Improvement Act of 2026; H.R. 7515, To direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the Nisqually Indian Tribe the Clear Creek Hatchery Infrastructure**

**April 29, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record on the following legislation: H.R. 7287, Lewis and Clark Regional Water System Expansion Feasibility Study Act; H.R. 7331, Dakota Mainstem Water Supply Project Feasibility Study Act; H.R. 8259, Reclamation Project Consultation Improvement Act of 2026; and H.R. 7515, To direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the Nisqually Indian Tribe the Clear Creek Hatchery Infrastructure.

**H.R. 7287, Lewis and Clark Regional Water System Expansion Feasibility Study Act**

The Lewis and Clark Regional Water System (LCRWS) is a non-profit entity that provides reliable drinking water to 20 member cities and rural water systems in southeast South Dakota, northwest Iowa, and southwest Minnesota. The LCRWS was incorporated in 1990 and authorized by Congress in 2000. Today, the system draws from the Missouri River aquifer through wells and pipelines to provide water to over 350,000 people, with ongoing expansions and planning efforts for future growth utilizing federal, state, and local funding over several decades.

Future plans for the LCRWS include increasing its original capacity of 23.5 million-gallons-per-day (MGD) to 45 MGD by 2028, with a future goal of providing 60 MGD of water throughout the region. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) involvement with LCRWS includes managing federal funds, providing technical analysis and guidance, and ensuring the project aligns with federal law, making it an example of federal-local partnership for water infrastructure.

H.R. 7287 authorizes appropriations of \$10 million for the feasibility study with a federal share not exceeding 50 percent. The study would evaluate the benefits and costs of options to expand the existing project. Since all 20 city and rural water system members of the LCRWS entity are connected to the project as of October 2024, the study would need to clearly identify the scope and scale of any proposed expansions.

**H.R. 7331, Dakota Mainstem Water Supply Project Feasibility Study Act**

The Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System is a proposed water system that would bring water to South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Santee Reservation of the Santee Sioux Tribe, which shares a border with South Dakota. Over 50 independent water providers are currently pursuing this project, which aims to improve community resilience, address health and safety concerns with water scarcity and quality, support new population and economic development, and provide agricultural sustainability for the region.

H.R. 7331 authorizes appropriations of \$10 million for a feasibility study with a federal share not exceeding 50 percent. The study would evaluate the benefits and costs of options to expand the existing project.

### **H.R. 8259, Reclamation Project Consultation Improvement Act of 2026**

H.R. 8259 would direct the Secretary to ensure that certain covered entities and contractors have routine and continuing opportunities to engage with Reclamation during the development of a biological assessment required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act for actions related to a federal water project located in Reclamation states. The bill requires that covered entities and contractors be provided timelines for the preparation of a biological assessment or biological opinion, a copy of a draft biological opinion, and opportunities to review and provide comment on draft biological opinions, if requested. H.R. 8259 further provides for engagement with covered entities and contractors on reasonable and prudent alternatives developed during the consultation process, among other provisions.

We appreciate the Sponsor's interest in providing increased transparency for entities and contractors involved in federal water projects throughout the west, although we note that increased partner involvement would require additional steps. We look forward to further collaboration with the Subcommittee on how to best to meet these goals.

### **H.R. 7515, To direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey to the Nisqually Indian Tribe the Clear Creek Hatchery Infrastructure**

H.R. 7515 would require the Secretary, acting through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), to convey all covered infrastructure of the Clear Creek Hatchery to the Nisqually Indian Tribe within 90 days of enactment for no consideration. Covered infrastructure includes all assets owned by the Service.

The hatchery is located on a 135-acre tract of land owned by the United States Army as part of Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The tract is also part of the Nisqually Reservation. The Service owns the hatchery infrastructure, including ponds, dams, fish ladders, and other items. The Nisqually Indian Tribe administers, operates, and manages the hatchery. The Clear Creek Hatchery provides support to Nisqually tribal fisheries and non-treaty fisheries in the Puget Sound Region.

The Service appreciates and greatly values the long history that the Nisqually Indian Tribe has of effectively managing operations at the hatchery. At this time, the Service does not support H.R.

7515 and defers to the U.S. Army regarding any security or strategic considerations regarding ownership of the hatchery infrastructure on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The Service looks forward to continuing our collaboration with the Nisqually Indian Tribe on the Clear Creek Hatchery and other shared priorities.