

MEMBER DAY TESTIMONY
REP. STANSBURY (NM-01)
May 25, 2022

Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. Under your leadership, this Committee and your staff do vital work to improve and support water management and infrastructure and energy development across the United States.

I am coming to you live from New Mexico's First Congressional District. Our state is currently battling the worst wildfire in our history as the West is facing its worst drought in over 1,200 years. I urge you to keep these concerning realities in mind as we consider the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations. Nearly every time I speak with my constituents, New Mexicans express their deep concerns about ensuring that our water infrastructure is up to the challenge of responding to this drought and increasing climate and hydrologic change.

To this end, we are humbly requesting the inclusion of several community-driven and science-based proposals in the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations package, which would greatly improve water infrastructure and management in New Mexico's First Congressional District.

WaterSMART Program

The WaterSMART Program under the Bureau of Reclamation is one of the most important federal programs that helps communities address drought and water security. In the face of increasing aridity across the West, this program is a key component of conserving water for our communities. That is why I joined Representative Napolitano and many of my colleagues in requesting strong funding for the WaterSMART Program at a level that will fully support long-

term sustainability and cost-effective solutions to combat severe drought and water needs of the American West.

I also introduced legislation—H.R. 6238—that allows the Secretary of the Interior to reduce or waive the non-Federal cost-share for this program for Tribes. Investing in strong funding is vital to supporting our communities in building a more resilient, self-sufficient and drought-tolerant economy in the seventeen western states.

Pueblo Irrigation Infrastructure Improvement Grants

I'd like to talk about another key program for Tribal water access in New Mexico. The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 authorized \$4 million to the Bureau of Reclamation to study irrigation infrastructure for 18 federally-recognized Pueblos in New Mexico. These Pueblos have relied on water from the Rio Grande Basin for cultural, agricultural, community, and ceremonial purposes since time immemorial. This study identified nearly \$280 million in irrigation improvements needed on Pueblo lands.

That is why I am asking the committee, and my colleagues to fund an included \$200 million for Reclamation's Pueblo Irrigation Infrastructure Improvement Grants to address the infrastructure needs of these projects, which are so vital to the economic, cultural, and environmental resilience of our Pueblo Tribal communities in the Rio Grande Basin.

Water Data and Rio Grande Water Security Acts

Last week, I introduced a bipartisan, bicameral drought and water security package that includes a reauthorization of the Rio Grande Pueblo Irrigation Infrastructure Improvement Grants. This

comprehensive water legislation will work to address the water needs of our communities, ensure our Tribes and Pueblos have access to critical water infrastructure funding, and re-imagine the ways we use and share water data.

The Rio Grande is one of the West's most iconic rivers and provides life-giving water to millions of people throughout the Basin. That is why I introduced the Rio Grande Water Security Act to create the resources needed to develop and implement an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan for the Rio Grande Basin. We must give our water managers the tools they need to improve water management, support water conservation, and increase collaboration.

While we face nearly unprecedented water challenges, our communities, water managers, and water users are forced to rely on siloed—and in many cases, outdated—water data. A critical component of our legislative package is the Water Data Act, legislation to empower communities, farmers, and local governments to harness the power of water data to transform management across the United States by establishing a national framework for sharing, integrating, and utilizing water data. Under the framework established in the Water Data Act, federal agencies with a significant role in generating or using water data will create common standards for water data to unlock the power of existing and future data for use in countless tools and technologies. The Water Data Act also codifies the Advisory Committee on Water Information of non-Federal partners to advise the process and establishes a new \$25 million grant program under the Department of Interior that invests in next-generation water data sharing tools and technology for governments, water users, non-profits, and private businesses.

These bills will revolutionize our management systems and impact millions of people across our nation. While these bills were filed after Appropriations deadlines, I would like to request this Committee consider adding in funding for several provisions contained within the legislation, including \$200 million for Rio Grande Pueblo Irrigation Infrastructure Improvement Grants, \$25 million for Water Data Grants, \$15 million for creation of the Water Data Framework and the associated Water Data Council and Advisory Committee, and robust support for a Rio Grande Basin Working Group to develop and implement a Rio Grande Basin Plan.

Thank you for consideration of these requests. Regardless of whether you call New Mexico, Ohio, or Idaho your home—we share the fundamental, life-giving resource of water, and it is up to all of us to ensure every American has equitable access to the water resources they need to thrive.

I sincerely appreciate the time and the hard work of the Committee as you consider Member priorities while drafting the FY23 Appropriations bills. I am happy to answer any questions you might have, and I yield any remaining time.