

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Tom McClintock**  
**House Natural Resources Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife Oversight Hearing**  
**June 13, 2019**

The sub-committee meets today to hear three bills involving wildlife and four involving water that evoke Shakespeare's lament of "a tale ... full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

We have HR 1446 by Mr. Clay to authorize the continued sale of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal stamps until they're sold out, although it is not clear why we would authorize the reprinting of stamps that have already been destroyed.

HR 2685 by Mr. Van Drew would reauthorize the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992.

HR 967 by Mr. Gianforte authorizes certain water expenditures for rural Montana, which is supportable if the bill is amended to conform to the beneficiary pays principle that the federal money be repaid by the project beneficiaries and not by federal taxpayers.

HR 1976 by Mr. Kildee authorizes \$45 million over five years for the US Geologic Service to establish standards for per and poly fluoroalkyl substances – that are used in a variety of products. It should be noted that there are a variety of chemicals within this category and the bill need to provide regulatory flexibility and not a one-size-fits-all mandate.

A discussion draft by Mr. Lowenthal raises more serious concerns. It opens the door to overregulation of on critical infrastructure development such as electric transmission and distribution lines, telecommunications towers, and energy development. Its purpose is to protect migratory bird species, but as we will hear, more of these birds are killed by feral cats than the industries that would bear the burdens contemplated by this bill.

Finally, we have two bills before us that comprise the biggest disappointment of today's hearing.

HR 1162 by Ms. Napolitano that would permanently extend Title XVI programs that provide grants for local water recycling projects. The Title XVI program has almost \$200 million of authorized funding for abandoned projects – none of which this bill deauthorizes. Clearly, this program would benefit from more Congressional oversight, not less.

I have often raised two objections to this sort of spending. First, it completely ignores the cost-benefit ratio of such projects and it forces one community to pay for another community's water projects. It casts aside the beneficiary pays principle for one that can only be described as robbing St. Petersburg to pay St. Paul.

And then there is HR 2473 by Mr. Harder, which includes HR 1162 and then raises its folly. It is actually a hodge-podge of water recycling, desalination and conservation spending that completely ignores the fundamental economics of water. It is precisely this approach that has sent water costs spiraling and created artificial water shortages in one of the most water rich regions of our country.

According to the California Energy Commission for San Diego County, the mean average cost of water differs greatly, depending on the source. The most expensive way to produce water is desalination at the cost of \$2,300 per acre foot. Water recycling costs \$1,500. Importing water costs \$925. Groundwater storage costs \$737. The cheapest source of water is good, old-fashioned surface storage – dams and reservoirs – at \$600 per acre foot. Surface water storage gives us nearly four times as much water for the dollar as desalination. In other words, storing water before it is lost to the ocean costs roughly \$600 while reclaiming it once it's been lost to the ocean costs \$2,300. Water desalination is a great idea if you don't mind your water bill quadrupling.

Everyone agrees we need to produce more water infrastructure. The question is, for the same price, would it be better to get one gallon or four gallons?

The supporters of HR 2473 apparently can't tell the difference. Finally, in a transparent attempt to give the illusion it would produce some additional water storage, it provides \$100 million each for surface OR groundwater storage, as well as water recycling and desalination – starting in 2030. Yet it completely ignores the most cost-effective and shovel-ready water project in the state: raising Shasta dam by 18 feet. That project is ready to go and would store an additional 630,000 acre feet at a fraction of the price of the projects that are to be funded – in 2030.

We have just come through a four-year drought in which our dams were drained nearly empty only to be followed by two years of record-rainfall that we have had to release from those same dams because we have nowhere to store it for the next drought. And instead of learning from that experience, we are contemplating the same mistakes that have taken California from a land of abundance to a land of chronic shortage.