



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Staff: Richie O’Connell ([richie@mail.house.gov](mailto:richie@mail.house.gov)), Doug Levine ([doug.levine@mail.house.gov](mailto:doug.levine@mail.house.gov)), Kirby Struhar ([kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov](mailto:kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov)), and Thomas Shipman ([thomas.shipman@mail.house.gov](mailto:thomas.shipman@mail.house.gov)); x5-8331  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 2, 2025  
**Subject:** Legislative Hearing on 5 Bills

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The Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries will hold a legislative hearing on five bills: H.R. 2073 (Rep. Newhouse), “*Defending our Dams Act*”; H.R. 3692 (Rep. Moulton), To reauthorize the Young Fishermen’s Development Act; H.R. 4255 (Rep. Gosar), “*Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025*”; H.R. 4256 (Rep. Min), “*Digital Coast Reauthorization Act of 2025*”; and H.R. 4970 (Rep. LaMalfa), “*Orland Project Water Management Act*”.

The hearing will take place on **Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.** in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.

Member offices are requested to notify Jackson Renfro ([jackson.renfro@mail.house.gov](mailto:jackson.renfro@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- H.R. 2073 builds on a presidential memorandum signed by President Trump to prevent any federal funds from being used to allow or study the breach of the Lower Snake River dams. The dams are a critical component of the Federal Columbia River Power System, a significant energy resource, and support industries such as agriculture, tourism, shipping, and trade. Ensuring the long-term operational certainty of these dams will be critical for the Pacific Northwest.
- 4255 heeds the calls of ranchers, local governments, states, and tribes to restore accountability and sanity to federal management of the Mexican wolf in western New Mexico and eastern Arizona.
- 4970 provides water users in California with the flexibility necessary to optimize their resources regardless of the water year.
- H.R. 3692 and H.R. 4256 reauthorize expiring programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that are integral to coastal and fishing communities.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Members of Congress)

- *To Be Announced*

### Panel II (Administration Witnesses)

- **Mr. Dustin Sherer**, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Water and Science, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. [*H.R. 2073, H.R. 4255, and H.R. 4970*]

### Panel III (Outside Experts)

- **Mr. Tom Paterson**, President-Elect, New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, Luna, New Mexico [*H.R. 4255*]
- **Mr. Clark Mather**, Executive Director, Northwest RiverPartners, Vancouver, Washington [*H.R. 2073*]
- **Mr. Bill Vanderwaal**, General Manager, Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, Willows, California [*H.R. 4970*]
- **The Honorable Shannon F. Wheeler**, Chairman, Nez Perce Tribe, Lapwai, Idaho [*H.R. 2073*] [*Minority witness*]

## III. BACKGROUND

### H.R. 2073 (Rep. Newhouse), “Defending our Dams Act”

Located in Washington state’s portion of the Columbia River Basin, the Lower Snake River dams<sup>1</sup> were authorized by Congress in 1945 and have the capacity to supply more than 3,000 megawatts of carbon-free energy.<sup>2</sup> The Lower Snake River dams help ensure the reliability of the Pacific Northwest power system, particularly during periods of high demand or emergencies.<sup>3</sup> These dams also play a critical role in reducing transportation emissions. Between 50 and 60 million tons of cargo are transported by barge along the Columbia Snake River System each year,<sup>4</sup> as well as 40 percent of America’s wheat.<sup>5</sup> This infrastructure provides energy security for millions across the region and supports the agriculture, shipping, and tourism sectors.

The Lower Snake River dams are part of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). In total, the FCRPS encompasses 31 federal hydropower dams in the Pacific Northwest operated by

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<sup>1</sup> The Lower Snake River Dams consist of four separate dams: Ice Harbor Lock and Dam, Lower Monumental Dam, Little Goose Dam, and Lower Granite Dam. John Frittelli, et al., “Columbia River System Operations and the Future of the Lower Snake River Dams,” Congressional Research Service, June 7, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48089>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *BPA Lower Snake River Dams Power Replacement Study*, Energy and Environmental Economics, Inc., July 2022, <https://www.ethree.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/e3-bpa-lower-snake-river-dams-power-replacement-study.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Executive Summary: Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement*, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and Bonneville Power Administration, July 2020, <https://usace.contentdm.oclc.org/utis/getfile/collection/p16021coll7/id/14957>.

<sup>5</sup> “Lower Snake River Dams: A Value to the Nation,” U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District, <https://www.nww.usace.army.mil/Missions/Lower-Snake-River-Dams/>.

the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation).<sup>6</sup> In the Pacific Northwest, hydropower accounts for over 50 percent of the region’s energy supply.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the immense importance of the Lower Snake River dams and the continuous work to improve fish passage rates, radical environmental groups have exploited the litigation system for decades in their pursuit of dam removal.<sup>8</sup>

Those in favor of breaching (i.e., removing) the Lower Snake River dams often overlook both the value of the existing infrastructure and the costs associated with replacing the power it generates. In 2016, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) estimated that replacing these dams would increase power costs by \$274 million to \$372 million per year.<sup>9</sup> Six years later, in 2022, BPA commissioned another study, which found that the cost of replacing the output from these dams ranges from \$415 million to \$860 million per year through 2045.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, using the assumptions of litigants who support breaching the Lower Snake River dams, up to 1.2 terawatt-hours (or 1,200,000 megawatt-hours) of replacement energy would depend on technologies not yet readily available, such as hydrogen-fueled combustion turbines.<sup>11</sup>

The future of the Lower Snake River dams was greatly jeopardized during the Biden administration. In 2021, following decades of litigation, the federal government, the State of Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe, and other plaintiffs filed an agreement with the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon that outlined how dam operations would be altered in the coming year, while allowing the parties to reach further agreement on long-term operations.<sup>12</sup> Later, in March 2022, the Biden White House and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) published a blog post that outlined the “path forward” for the Columbia River Basin following a consultation between federal agencies and tribes of the Columbia River Basin.<sup>13</sup> The blog post asserted that breaching the Lower Snake River dams “merit[ed] serious consideration.”<sup>14</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>6</sup> “Federal Columbia River Power System,” U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, last updated July 2, 2025, <https://www.usbr.gov/pn/fcrps/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> “Power Generation Map Overview,” Northwest Power and Conservation Council, <https://www.nwccouncil.org/energy/energy-topics/power-supply/power-generation-map-overview/>.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Todd True, “Breakthrough in 20+ Year Legal Battle Over Fate of Snake River Salmon,” Earthjustice, January 3, 2022, <https://earthjustice.org/experts/todd-true/breakthrough-in-20-year-legal-battle-over-fate-of-snake-river-salmon> (Earthjustice describes how they are part of an eco-activist network that has sued the federal government for over two decades in order to “breach the Snake River dams”).

<sup>9</sup> “A Northwest energy solution: Regional power benefits of the lower Snake River dams,” Bonneville Power Administration, March 2016, <https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/about/publications/fact-sheets/fs-201603-A-Northwest-energy-solution-Regional-power-benefits-of-the-lower-Snake-River-dams.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *BPA Lower Snake River Dams Power Replacement Study*, Energy and Environmental Economics, Inc., July 2022, <https://www.ethree.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/e3-bpa-lower-snake-river-dams-power-replacement-study.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> “Biden-Harris Administration Announces Steps to Improve Conditions for Salmon in the Columbia River Basin,” U.S. Department of the Interior, October 21, 2021, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-steps-improve-conditions-salmon-columbia-river>.

<sup>13</sup> “Columbia River Basin Fisheries: Working Together to Develop a Path Forward,” The White House, March 28, 2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/ceq/news-updates/2022/03/28/columbia-river-basin-fisheries-working-together-to-develop-a-path-forward/>.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

CEQ engaged the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to “mediate and facilitate between the parties in the litigation and the regional sovereigns, including Tribal Nations and states.”<sup>15</sup>

Troublingly, in September 2022 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a report titled “Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead.”<sup>16</sup> This report stated that breaching the Lower Snake River dams was the “centerpiece” of achieving “abundant” stocks of salmon, steelhead, and other fish species.<sup>17</sup> The report effectively shifted the federal government’s goal for native fisheries populations in the Columbia River Basin from “harvestable” to “abundant,”<sup>18</sup> without using the best available science. Stakeholders raised concerns regarding the process that went into the development of the report and noted that decisions regarding the future of the Lower Snake River dams are solely the responsibility of Congress.

Throughout the summer of 2023, many intervenor defendants expressed concerns with an overall lack of communication surrounding the negotiations regarding the future of the Lower Snake River dams. Kurt Miller, then Executive Director of Northwest RiverPartners, noted that several of their members—community-owned electric companies in states across the Northwest—had been left in the dark on the state of negotiations as the Biden administration continued to engage in mediation.

In December 2023, the Subcommittee held an oversight hearing on the extensive litigation that the Lower Snake River dams have faced over the last several years. The Subcommittee examined the mediation process that ultimately left power customers and stakeholders across the Northwest in the dark. More information on that hearing is available [here](#), and the hearing memo is available [here](#).

The day after the hearing, on December 13, 2023, the Biden administration announced the conclusion of this mediation process and an ultimate settlement agreement.<sup>19</sup> The settlement agreement included a ten-year pause in litigation around the operation of the Lower Snake River dams,<sup>20</sup> and included \$1 billion in funding over ten years, including direction for BPA to “invest \$300 million in restoring native fish and their habitat.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Columbia River Salmon and Other Native Fish Request for Information*, Council on Environmental Quality, 88 Fed. Reg. 28532, May 4, 2023, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/05/04/2023-09525/columbia-river-salmon-and-other-native-fish-request-for-information>.

<sup>16</sup> *Rebuilding Interior Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead*, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, September 30, 2022, p.17-18, <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-09/rebuilding-interior-columbia-basin-salmon-steelhead.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *See id.*

<sup>19</sup> Lynne Terry & Bill Lucia, “NW states, tribes reach ‘historic’ deal with feds over Columbia River Basin fish and dams,” Idaho Capital Sun, December 15, 2023, <https://idahocapitalsun.com/2023/12/15/nw-states-tribes-reach-historic-deal-with-feds-over-columbia-river-basin-fish-and-dams/>.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Yachnin, “White House pledges \$1B to restore Pacific Northwest salmon, steelhead,” E&E News, December 14, 2023, <https://www.eenews.net/articles/white-house-pledges-1b-to-restore-pacific-northwest-salmon-steelhead/>.

When this agreement was announced, a senior Earthjustice attorney stated that “we are now on a path to breach the four Lower Snake River dams.”<sup>22</sup> Organizations representing the many industries that rely on this critical infrastructure, however, viewed the settlement agreement far less favorably and claimed the following:

“This [agreement] turns its back on over three million electricity customers as well as the farming, transportation, navigation, and economic needs of the region . . . . By purposely excluding our respective organizations from the negotiations, literally millions of Northwest residents were deprived of fair representation in this process.”<sup>23</sup>

The Trump administration recognizes the danger that this settlement agreement poses to the Pacific Northwest and has already taken oppositional measures. On June 12, 2025, President Trump signed a presidential memorandum titled “Stopping Radical Environmentalism to Generate Power for the Columbia River Basin.”<sup>24</sup> Among other things, this memorandum directed the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Energy, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to “take all appropriate steps to withdraw from the Memorandum of Understanding filed on December 14, 2023.”<sup>25</sup> This marks an important step towards restoring certainty for the FCRPS, the Lower Snake River dams, and the many people and businesses that rely on this critical infrastructure.

Sponsored by Representative Dan Newhouse (R-WA-04), H.R. 2073 bolsters the President’s efforts by prohibiting any federal funds from being used “to allow, lead to, or study the breach or functional alteration of, including study of power, flood control, or navigation replacement of, or provide dam removal technical assistance for, the Lower Snake River dams.”<sup>26</sup>

### **H.R. 3692 (Rep. Moulton), To reauthorize the Young Fishermen’s Development Act.**

Commercial fishing is incredibly important to the U.S., both for the economic vitality of coastal communities and for our domestic food supply chain. In fact, NMFS, the primary federal regulator of America’s marine fisheries, found that the commercial fishing and seafood industry generated more than \$183 billion in economic value in sales and supported 1.6 million jobs in 2022.<sup>27</sup> Total fishery landings revenues for the commercial sector totaled \$5.9 billion that same year.<sup>28</sup> Beyond these sizeable economic benefits, commercial fishing also supplies the country with a healthy food source.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lynne Terry & Bill Lucia, “NW states, tribes reach ‘historic’ deal with feds over Columbia River Basin fish and dams,” Idaho Capital Sun, December 15, 2023, <https://idahocapitalsun.com/2023/12/15/nw-states-tribes-reach-historic-deal-with-feds-over-columbia-river-basin-fish-and-dams/>.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> White House. Presidential Memoranda. Stopping Radical Environmentalism to Generate Power for the Columbia River Basin. June 12, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/stopping-radical-environmentalism-to-generate-power-for-the-columbia-river-basin/>

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> H.R. 2073, 119<sup>th</sup> Congress, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2073/text>.

<sup>27</sup> *Fisheries Economics of the United States 2022*, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, November 2024. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2024-11/FEUS-2022-SPO248B.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> See Abigail Bennett, et al., “Contribution of Fisheries to Food and Nutrition Security: Current Knowledge, Policy, and Research,” NI Report 18-02, Duke University, Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability, 2018, [https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/contribution\\_of\\_fisheries\\_to\\_food\\_and\\_nutrition\\_security\\_0.pdf](https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/contribution_of_fisheries_to_food_and_nutrition_security_0.pdf).

Continued support for this sector will be vital, as the demand for seafood continues to increase. President Trump made such support a priority when he signed an executive order titled “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,”<sup>30</sup> which directed the Secretary of Commerce to take actions to reduce regulatory burdens on domestic fisheries and implement an America First Seafood Strategy.<sup>31</sup>

Advancing such a strategy and accomplishing the broader objective of enhancing the U.S. seafood and fishing sectors first requires an effective, knowledgeable, and prepared workforce. In 2020, Congress passed the Young Fishermen’s Development Act (P.L. 116-289), named after longtime Representative Don Young (R-AK), which was signed into law on January 5, 2021. This legislation created the Young Fishermen’s Development Grant Program and directed the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the National Sea Grant Office, to “make competitive grants to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for young fishermen.”<sup>32</sup> This program established criteria for the types of activities that these grants could support, set a limit of \$200,000 per fiscal year, and imposed a term limit of no more than three fiscal years.<sup>33</sup> The statute also directed the Secretary of Commerce to ensure regional balance in awarding grants.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the legislation also directed the Secretary of Commerce to work with Sea Grant organizations, fishing organizations, and the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils to carry out its terms. The grant program was initially authorized through Fiscal Year (FY) 2026.

H.R. 3692, introduced by Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA-06), reauthorizes the Young Fishermen’s Development Act, with all the existing criteria and guardrails, through FY 2031.

### **H.R. 4255 (Rep. Gosar), “Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025”**

The Mexican wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*), a subspecies of the gray wolf, was listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1976, as the species had become functionally extinct in the southwestern United States and was only rarely seen in Mexico.<sup>35</sup> From 1977 to 1980, the U.S. and Mexico initiated a captive breeding program, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) approved a recovery plan for the species in 1982.<sup>36</sup> The primary goal of the recovery plan was “to conserve and ensure the survival of *Canis lupus baileyi* by maintaining a captive breeding program and re-establishing a viable, self-sustaining population of at least 100 Mexican wolves in the middle to high elevations of a 5,000-square-mile area within the Mexican wolf’s historic range.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Executive Order 14276, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,” The White House, April 17, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidentialactions/2025/04/restoring-american-seafood-competitiveness/>.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> P. L. 116-289, “Young Fishermen’s Development Act,” <https://www.congress.gov/116/statute/STATUTE-134/STATUTE-134-Pg4886.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> “Conserving the Mexican Wolf,” U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://www.fws.gov/program/conserving-mexican-wolf/what-we-do>.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

In 1996, following the increased success of its captive breeding efforts, the Service published an environmental impact statement (EIS) that identified the Apache National Forest (now known as the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest) and the Gila National Forest in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico as potential locations to reintroduce captive-bred Mexican wolves into the wild.<sup>38</sup> On January 12, 1998, the Service established a nonessential experimental population area of Mexican wolves in Arizona and New Mexico under Section 10(j) of the ESA.<sup>39</sup> The intent of designating the species as nonessential was to provide additional flexibility to manage wolves responsible for livestock depredations and other wolf conflicts.<sup>40</sup> On March 29, 1998, 11 captive-bred wolves were released into the wild for the first time.<sup>41</sup>

In the last decade, the Service has repeatedly amended its regulations managing Mexican wolf populations. In 2015, for example, the Service amended its 10(j) rule to expand the nonessential population area south to the Mexican border and increased the number of areas where wolves could be reintroduced.<sup>42</sup> The Service also set a cap of 300-325 Mexican wolves within the population area. This rule was accompanied by a recovery plan for the species that was finalized in December 2017.<sup>43</sup> The rule and recovery plan were remanded by the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, which held that they did not contain adequate safeguards against the loss of genetically valuable wolves, among other issues.<sup>44</sup>

In 2022, the Service responded to the court's ruling by further revising the 10(j) rule and publishing a recovery plan that (1) increased recovery goals to an eight-year rolling average of at least 320 Mexican wolves in the United States, (2) set a goal of releasing 22 captive wolves per year into the wild to aid in genetic diversity, and (3) removed the population cap from the 2015 rule.<sup>45</sup> The recovery plan also called for the population in Mexico to average 200 wolves over an eight-year period, with the last three years exceeding 200 wolves.<sup>46</sup> The 2022 rule and recovery plan were upheld in federal court after being challenged by the Center for Biological Diversity and other radical environmental organizations, which claimed that the rule and recovery plan did not go far enough to expand wolf reintroductions and the geographic boundaries of the experimental population area.<sup>47</sup>

Today, the Mexican wolf population in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico has grown to a minimum of 286 wolves in the wild, with the population increasing for nine consecutive years.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 61 FR 19237.

<sup>39</sup> 63 FR 752-1772.

<sup>40</sup> "Conserving the Mexican Wolf," U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <https://www.fws.gov/program/conserving-mexican-wolf/what-we-do>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> 80 FR 2512.

<sup>43</sup> "Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, First Revision," U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, December 2017, <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2017MexicanWolfRecoveryPlanRevision1Final.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> *See Ctr. for Biological Diversity v. Jewell*, 4:15-cv-00019-JGZ (D. Ariz. March 31, 2018), <https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/18-04-0220cbd20v.20jewell20order.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> 87 FR 39348.

<sup>46</sup> "Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, Second Revision," U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, September 2022, [https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Final-Mexican-Wolf-Recovery-Plan-Second-Revision-2022-signed\\_508-compliant.pdfvision](https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Final-Mexican-Wolf-Recovery-Plan-Second-Revision-2022-signed_508-compliant.pdfvision).

<sup>47</sup> *See Ctr. for Biological Diversity v. Haaland*, 4:22-cv-00303-SHR (D. Ariz. March 31, 2025), [https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-azd-4\\_22-cv-00303/pdf/USCOURTS-azd-4\\_22-cv-00303-0.pdf](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-azd-4_22-cv-00303/pdf/USCOURTS-azd-4_22-cv-00303-0.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> "Mexican Wolf Number up for 9<sup>th</sup> Straight Year," Arizona Game & Fish Department, March 3, 2025, <https://www.azgfd.com/2025/03/03/mexican-wolf-numbers-up-for-9th-straight-year/>.

Additionally, there are 350 Mexican wolves housed in captive breeding facilities in Mexico and the U.S.<sup>49</sup> The 2022 rule required the Service to conduct a five-year evaluation of the Mexican wolf's recovery since the 2017 recovery plan was published.<sup>50</sup> On December 20, 2024, the Biden administration announced the findings of a “5-Year Evaluation of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Strategy.”<sup>51</sup> This revealed that the domestic Mexican wolf population was almost doubling the Service’s interim abundance goal of 145 wolves in the U.S., leading the Service to declare that the Mexican wolf population was surpassing its recovery goal in the U.S.<sup>52</sup>

The five-year evaluation’s portrayal of the species’ health in Mexico was less positive. There, the evaluation found that only an estimated 35 wolves were in the wild, well below the interim abundance target of 100 wolves.<sup>53</sup> Tying recovery of the species to a foreign jurisdiction, however, where the Service has no authority to manage wildlife, has frustrated those directly impacted by the species domestically.

As Mexican wolf populations increase, so do conflicts with humans and livestock. For example, in 2022, a single-collared Mexican wolf and its mate were responsible for more than 15 confirmed livestock depredations in less than a month. These same wolves produced pups and formed a pack, which killed more livestock, terrorized ranching families, and charged at least one ranch employee. Despite requests from at least one Member of Congress and local community residents and being empowered by its own 10(j) rule, the Service refused to lethally remove the problem wolves.<sup>54</sup>

In recent months, local governments in western New Mexico have begun to pass disaster declarations due to the heightened presence of Mexican wolves. On April 3, 2025, Catron County, New Mexico, passed a disaster declaration in response to excessive livestock depredations and impacts on the local economy, including the hunting industry.<sup>55</sup> The declaration states that in the last year the ranching industry has incurred “hundreds of thousands of dollars in actual losses and thousands of missing cattle” due to Mexican wolves.<sup>56</sup> On May 13, Socorro County, New Mexico, which neighbors Catron County to the east, adopted a similar resolution.<sup>57</sup> These resolutions have been supported by numerous other counties in both Arizona and New Mexico, as well as the Alamo Chapter of the Navajo Nation.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> “Mexican Wolf Recovery Plan, Second Revision.” U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. September 2022. [https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Final-Mexican-Wolf-Recovery-Plan-Second-Revision-2022-signed\\_508-compliant.pdfvision](https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Final-Mexican-Wolf-Recovery-Plan-Second-Revision-2022-signed_508-compliant.pdfvision)

<sup>51</sup> “5-year Evaluation Reveals Mexican Wolf Population Surpassing Recovery Goals in the United States.” Aislinn Maestas. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. December 20, 2024. [Mexican Wolf Population Surpassing Recovery Goals in the United States | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#)

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> *See, e.g.*, letter from Member of Congress to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (May 3, 2022), on file with the Committee.

<sup>55</sup> Resolution 56-2025. “Declaring a Disaster in the County of Catron due to the Extreme and Continual Injury & Damage caused by the Mexican Grey Wolves.” Catron County Board of Commissioners. April 3, 2025. [Resolution 56-2025 - Declaring a Disaster in the County of Catron Due to the Extreme and Continual Injury and Damage Caused by Mexican Grey Wolves.pdf](#)

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> “Resolution 2025-37: Declaring a Disaster in the Southwest Area of Socorro County due to the Extreme and Continual Injury & Damage Caused by Mexican Grey Wolves,” Socorro County Board of Commissioners, May 13, 2025, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rDPXDDGI\\_Bj1LzS66LWCCKa2UKCdHFJJ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rDPXDDGI_Bj1LzS66LWCCKa2UKCdHFJJ/view).

<sup>58</sup> See resolutions on file with the Committee.

Responding to these incidents, Representative Paul Gosar (R-AZ-09) introduced H.R. 4255. The bill would delist the Mexican wolf from the ESA, while also nullifying the Service’s 2015 and 2022 rules. The legislation would also prevent the Service from considering the status of the Mexican wolf in Mexico when changing the listing status or formulating a recovery plan, should the species be listed again under the ESA.

### **H.R. 4256 (Rep. Min), “Digital Coast Reauthorization Act of 2025”**

NOAA first launched its Digital Coast program in 2007 in response to a growing need among coastal managers for better access to data, tools, and training to address increasing coastal challenges.<sup>59</sup> In December 2020, President Trump signed into law the Digital Coast Act,<sup>60</sup> which formally authorized this program through FY 2025 and provided NOAA the mandate to continue delivering critical data and tools to support coastal communities.

Led by NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management (OCM), Digital Coast is a centralized online platform that offers tools, training, and other resources that are tailored to help coastal communities make informed, data-driven decisions.<sup>61</sup> The platform includes a wide array of features—such as high-quality coastal datasets, interactive tools, and online training courses—to help communities plan for sea-level rise, reduce flood risk, and effectively manage coastal communities and ecosystems across the U.S.<sup>62</sup> According to a recent study, Digital Coast’s training programs have resulted in between \$1.8 million and \$9.7 million in annual benefits.<sup>63</sup>

H.R. 4256, sponsored by Representative Dave Min (D-CA-47), seeks to extend the program’s authorization at its existing levels through FY 2030. The bill also makes a series of technical enhancements to expand user access and broaden the types of data collected. Notably, the legislation would require that coastal data be fully and freely accessible, ensuring that users can interact with and download data without restriction or cost. Additionally, the bill would widen the scope of data to include underground infrastructure and subsurface utilities, ensuring that Digital Coast’s dataset is as comprehensive as possible.

### **H.R. 4970 (Rep. LaMalfa), “Orland Project Water Management Act”**

The Orland Unit of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (also known as the Orland Project) was authorized by the Interior Secretary in 1907. Located in California’s Glenn, Tehama, and Colusa Counties, about 100 miles north of Sacramento, the Orlando Project started providing water in 1910 to 20,000 acres of farmland, primarily in the Sacramento Valley.<sup>64</sup> The Orland Project consists of two main dams to store water, East Park and Stony Gorge; two diversion dams;

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<sup>59</sup> “About Digital Coast,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Coastal Management, July 22, 2025, [https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/about/#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Coast%20\(authorized%20by,make%20these%20data%20truly%20useful.](https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/about/#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Coast%20(authorized%20by,make%20these%20data%20truly%20useful.)

<sup>60</sup> P.L. 116-223, Digital Coast Act, <https://www.congress.gov/116/statute/STATUTE-134/STATUTE-134-Pg1067.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> “What is Digital Coast?” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, June 16, 2024, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/digital-coast.html>.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> “About Digital Coast,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Coastal Management, July 22, 2025, [https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/about/#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Coast%20\(authorized%20by,make%20these%20data%20truly%20useful.](https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/about/#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Coast%20(authorized%20by,make%20these%20data%20truly%20useful.)

<sup>64</sup> “Orland Unit,” U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, <https://www.usbr.gov/projects/index.php?id=373>.

almost 17 miles of canals; and 139 miles of laterals.<sup>65</sup> The Orland Project was authorized and constructed several decades before the Central Valley Project (CVP) and operates as a separate unit from the CVP. As a result, the Orland Project cannot transfer water to nearby CVP contractors like the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, except in years when the governor declares a drought emergency.

H.R. 4970, introduced by Representative Doug LaMalfa (R-CA-01), would amend the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-250) to authorize the Orland Project to transfer water to the CVP and its contractors when surplus is available without requiring burdensome authorizations. This would not increase any allocations for CVP contractors but would allow Orland to provide surplus water to contractors, enabling them to allocate water to more acreage when available.

#### **IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & ANALYSIS**

##### **H.R. 2073 (Rep. Newhouse), “Defending our Dams Act”**

###### **Section 2. Lower Snake River Dams.**

- Prohibits federal funds from being used to breach, or study the breach or alteration of, the Lower Snake River dams.

##### **H.R. 3692 (Rep. Moulton), To reauthorize the Young Fishermen’s Development Act.**

###### **Section 1. Young Fishermen’s Development Act Reauthorization.**

- Reauthorizes the Young Fishermen’s Development grant program at existing authorization levels through FY 2031.

##### **H.R. 4255 (Rep. Gosar), “Enhancing Safety for Animals Act of 2025”**

###### **Section 2. Delisting of Mexican Wolf.**

- Contains findings related to the status of the Mexican wolf, including its population status, the impact of its presence on local communities and economies, and the management shortcomings of the Service.
- Delists the Mexican Wolf from the ESA.
- Nullifies the Service’s 2015 and 2022 rules relating to the management of the Mexican wolf.
- Prevents the Service from considering the status of the Mexican wolf in Mexico when changing the listing status or formulating a recovery plan, if the species were to ever be relisted.

##### **H.R. 4256 (Rep. Min), “Digital Coast Reauthorization Act of 2025”**

###### **Section 2. Reauthorization of Digital Coast Act.**

- Requires data to be fully and freely available.

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<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

- Requires data related to underground infrastructure and subsurface utilities to be made available.
- Reauthorizes the program through FY 2030.

**H.R. 4970 (Rep. LaMalfa), “Orland Project Water Management Act”**

**Section 2. Amendment to Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991.**

- Amends the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-250) to authorize the Orland Project to transfer water to the CVP and its contractors, regardless of water year type.

**V. COST**

A formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is not yet available for any of the bills.

**VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION**

The Trump administration’s position on any of the bills is unknown at this time.

**VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW**

**[H.R. 3692](#)**

**[H.R. 4256](#)**

**[H.R. 4970](#)**