

(Washington, DC) - **Congressman Wally Herger (R-CA) testified before the House Natural Resources Committee today regarding the California drought.** The Committee requested Congressman Herger appear before the committee to provide information pertaining to the ongoing drought throughout the 2nd Congressional District. Herger's testimony appears below. Click [here](#) for video footage.

"Thank you Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings for holding this hearing today on the dire water situation the State of California is currently facing. The drought conditions that the state has been battling the past three years, in conjunction with an out-of-balance regulatory scheme, have severely inhibited virtually every aspect of life in the Northern California district I represent.

"I think what is most important to note is that drought is nothing new to California. We have experienced drought such as this at regular intervals since settling the State, and it will surely occur again. However, what has recently developed is the regulatory drought that is stretching demands for this precious resource far beyond the capability of the supply. In 1992, Congress enacted the Central Valley Project Improvement Act in an attempt to reconcile the many environmental needs of California's fish and wildlife species with the needs of California's Central Valley Project water users. I must point out that this is the first prolonged drought that we have experienced since enactment of that law and it is obviously showing some unsustainable weaknesses. It was recently announced that many CVP agricultural users would receive almost zero water, even as wildlife refuges would receive a majority of their usual allocation. This will result in the fallowing of many thousands of acres of agricultural land; much of which are permanent tree crops that will not recover.

"At the same time, the federal Endangered Species Act is further intensifying this regulatory drought. In Tehama County, an ESA-based lawsuit has required that the Red Bluff Diversion Dam cease operating as an efficient, gravity-fed diversion and will need to be replaced with a power-driven screened pumping plant to provide irrigation water to 150,000 acres of agriculture. These farmers are working diligently under an expedited timeframe to construct this project before further litigation affects the dam's operation prior to completion of the pumping plant. In addition, this situation has resulted in the loss of Lake Red Bluff - created by the dam's operation - traditionally home to an annual boat race that has been an important economic driver for the City of Red Bluff.

"And of course everyone remembers the 2001 irrigation shutoff in the Klamath Basin. Klamath

Project users remain subject to circumstances in which the ESA actually violates itself due to conflicting biological opinions for the needs of different fish species. Farmers in this region will likely still see their water deliveries delayed this spring despite a 100% snowpack. 100% snowpack, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, is NOT a drought, but yet these farmers are still forced to struggle with restricted water supplies.

“Finally, I would like to point out that these laws indirectly affect the water supply as well. For example, the ESA, NEPA and our other federal environmental laws have effectively disrupted the management of our federal forests, resulting in a situation where these unnaturally dense stands place unprecedented demand on water consumption, affecting runoff and groundwater tables in addition to increasing their susceptibility to disease, insects, and catastrophic wildfire.

“We simply must find a sustainable, balanced, and comprehensive solution to this water situation that will allow us to equitably meet the needs of all water users, human and otherwise. New water storage must be part of the solution to enable all interests to ‘get well together’. Continuing down the same path we have been on for decades is NOT acceptable. Thank you again, Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to address this urgent situation.”