

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, Chairman Huffman, and Ranking Member Bentz:

As you know, the State of California and other parts of the West are facing catastrophic drought that will impact water supplies for our communities and help exacerbate massive forest fires. For example, water storage throughout the Central Valley Project (CVP) is historically low, the Bureau of Reclamation has already paused its 5% allocation for south-of-the-Delta Federal agricultural water users, the State of California has reduced the State Water Project allocation from 10% initially to 5%, and the Colorado River snowpack “fell well short of expectations”.¹ Furthermore, the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior recently issued a joint statement on the “western water crisis”² before being directed to lead a task force on the drought.³ Additionally, the Secretary of Agriculture declared 50 counties in California “as primary natural disaster areas due to a recent drought.”⁴

Despite this attention, we are dismayed that the House Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee has not turned its focus toward this worsening situation. Instead, it chose to hold today’s hearing on “*Wildlife Trafficking and the Growing Online Marketplace*” and its next hearing on May 4, 2021 will address coral reef conservation. While we are not discounting these issues, we believe that the Subcommittee should be focused on higher priorities – particularly those that could help alleviate human suffering.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/04/16/colorado-water-basin-snowpack-drought/>

² <https://www.doi.gov/news/joint-statement-interior-secretary-deb-haaland-and-agriculture-secretary-tom-vilsack-western>

³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-biden-drought/white-house-moves-to-assist-western-us-communities-hit-by-drought-idUSL1N2ME32O>

⁴ <https://www.sjgov.org/uploadedfiles/sjc/departments/agcomm/news/announcements/cadroughtdisaster03052021.pdf>

It is our understanding that the Majority Subcommittee staff refused to add our legislation reauthorizing Subtitle J of Title III of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act to the May 4, 2021 hearing agenda. This legislation can help alleviate drought, yet we understand that it was important to the Democratic Majority that the hearing be solely focused on coral reefs. This concerning lack of effort on the short and long-term legislative needs to combat drought and instead focusing on narrow flora and fauna issues is unacceptable and appears tone deaf to the people in California and across the West on the frontlines of the drought's impacts.

For too long, many of our constituents have watched the needs of species like the Delta smelt outweigh the needs of people. The Democratic Majority's hearings and lack of action on drought only perpetuate this, as well as turns a blind eye to the adverse impacts the drought is having on California's ability to grow the food we all eat and how it is hurting some of the poorest communities in our state.

We may not agree on all of the prescriptions for combating drought, but we hope you agree with us that the time is now to focus on these matters. Our constituents do not deserve to watch Congress do nothing while their communities are increasingly in danger of becoming parched and/or going up in flames. We stand ready to work with you on what we believe can be bipartisan drought solutions.

Sincerely,



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress



TOM MCCLINTOCK
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMALFA
Member of Congress



MIKE GARCIA
Member of Congress



KEVIN MCCARTHY
House Republican Leader



DEVIN NUNES
Member of Congress



DAVID G. VALADAO
Member of Congress



MICHELLE STEEL
Member of Congress



YOUNG KIM
Member of Congress



JAY OBERNOLTE
Member of Congress



DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress