

Statement of Dr. Timothy Quinn
Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies
Before the Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Hearing including S. 1138, H.R. 637, and H.R. 2522
April 27, 2010

Madame Chairman and members of the subcommittee, The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) appreciates this opportunity to present testimony on the California water bills that are part of today's agenda and comment on their important role in helping California address its ongoing water crisis, the worst in our state's history. My name is Tim Quinn and I am the Executive Director of ACWA. ACWA is the largest coalition of public water agencies in the country. Its nearly 450 public agency members are collectively responsible for 90% of the water delivered to cities, farms and businesses in California.

ACWA is pleased to favor S. 1138/H.R. 2442, to amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to expand the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program, and for other purposes; H.R. 637, to authorize the Secretary, in cooperation with the City of San Juan Capistrano, California, to participate in the design, planning, and construction of an advanced water treatment plant facility and recycled water system, and for other purposes; and H.R. 2522, to raise the ceiling on the Federal share of the cost of the Calleguas Municipal Water District Recycling Project, and for other purposes. These bills are sponsored by members from both sides of the California delegation and demonstrate our state's overall broad and strong support for the Title XVI Program.

The projects in these bills are designed to provide important benefits. S 1138, which builds on the success of last Congress, will enable the San Francisco Bay Area Recycle Water Coalition (BARWC) to build six new projects and fully fund two previously authorized projects. The regional Coalition is a partnership of fourteen public agencies committed to developing highly leveraged, locally managed recycled water as a long-term, sustainable solution for communities that will help ensure the security of water supplies in the Bay-Delta for years to come. In the past two years, the coalition partners have started or finished construction on 4 projects that have received federal appropriations, and 3 more projects are approaching construction. The six new projects requesting authorization today in S 1138 will generate over 8,000 acre-feet per year of new sustainable water supply. It will reduce wastewater discharges to aquatic environments, and reduce the demand for limited fresh water from our fragile Bay-Delta system. Additionally, the Bay Area Recycle Water Coalition is requesting that the bill be amended to include three BARWC projects that joined the coalition since the House companion bill HR 2442 was introduced a year ago. These three projects will yield 12,400 AFY. With funding assistance, these projects can approach construction within 24 months. When added to the current projects in S 1138, the near-term yield is over 20,000 AFY of water, which is over 6.6 billion gallons per year or 18.2 million gallons

per day. That's enough water to meet the needs of approximately 60,000 homes. Finally, the Bay Area coalition requests that the bill be amended to include the same language inserted in H.R.2442 at the request of the Congressional Budget Office, to clarify that funding in the bill is subject to appropriations.

Another important Project, H.R. 637 – the South Orange County Recycled Water Enhancement Act -- authorizes the Bureau to participate in the design, planning, and construction of an advanced water treatment plant facility and recycled water system. This Project supports state efforts to improve water supply and reliability by reducing the amount of reusable water being discharged to the ocean, while creating a new source of water that does not place a burden on the limited imported water supply from the California Aqueduct System and the Colorado River Basin. The Project is critical to expanding water supply reliability. In partnership with local Cites and water districts, the Project would provide recycled water for non-potable and irrigation consumers. The resultant recycled water will lessen local demand on imported water and is a significant step towards creating a local sustainable water supply.

H.R. 2522 will authorize Bureau of Reclamation support for Phases 2 and 3 of the Calleguas Municipal Water District Recycling Project. The Calleguas project has been found feasible by the BOR. The Project is vital to Ventura County's water reliability as imported supplies become increasingly vulnerable to drought, climate change, catastrophic levee failures from flood and/or seismic events, and regulatory shutdowns of pumping facilities for habitat protection. The Project will improve water supply reliability and reduce dependence on imported water supplies by making it possible to put local brackish water supplies to beneficial use. By treating groundwater to remove salts and moving those salts away from surface waters and groundwater, water agencies in Ventura County solve a water quality problem, while improving local water supply reliability. Completion of Phases 2 and 3 of the Project will facilitate the reclamation and reuse of about 43,000 acre-feet per year of water.

Madame Chairman and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of ACWA's Board of Directors, I want to commend you for convening this hearing. The hearing is especially timely. California is experiencing an immediate and urgent crisis in water supply as a result of the combined effects of drought and increasingly stringent regulation under the Endangered Species Act. In March, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, in an interview with the editorial board of the Los Angeles Times said, "I would say that the people of California recognize that water is the lifeblood of their communities...and the economy is going to go to hell in a hand basket in California unless something happens that is credible with respect to the water supply issues -- north, south and the bay delta. So I would just say California... You're sitting on a ticking time bomb, and you better get your act together, because otherwise the bomb's going to go off." (L.A. Times, March 22, 2010)

And two weeks ago, Anne Castle, the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of Interior, testified to the House Energy and Water subcommittee on

appropriations that “The situation in California’s Bay-Delta ecosystem is a full-blown crisis that requires all hands on deck.”

In November 2009, the state of California passed historic legislation to tackle the water crisis head-on. The legislative package, which includes four policy bills and a proposed water resources bond, makes it the policy of California to achieve the “Coequal goals...of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem.”

To accomplish the coequal goals, the legislation calls for the implementation of an aggressive, comprehensive water management program that requires investment in three broad areas:

- 1) New infrastructure, including improved conveyance in the Sacramento -San Joaquin Delta and new surface and groundwater storage;
- 2) Habitat restoration and watershed improvements to help restore natural functions in the ecological system; and
- 3) Local water resource development projects, including water recycling, brackish and sea water desalination, water use efficiency and other projects to increase local water supply resources and thereby reduce demands for imported water.

This hearing provides assurances that Congress recognizes the urgency of the California water crisis and is acting to support the implementation of key elements in the California comprehensive water management strategy. Recycling projects like those in northern and southern California under consideration here today are an extremely important source of new supply from ACWA’s statewide perspective. They are vital to meeting growing water demands in a manner consistent with the state’s new comprehensive water management strategy. To the extent their implementation can be significantly accelerated, these projects can help combat the immediate crisis in California arising from drought, and excessively restrictive regulations on water supply under the Endangered Species Act.

In her testimony, Secretary Castle said Interior “continues to aggressively pursue a comprehensive water supply and restoration plan” for California. Part of this plan is their newly announced WaterSMART program. Interior is requesting \$29 million in Fiscal Year 2011 to fund projects such as the ones we are discussing today through the Title XVI program. ACWA welcomes Interior’s support for increased funding for the Title XVI program but recommends at least \$75 million each year should be requested by the Department to help reduce the large backlog of unfunded authorized projects. This could leverage at least \$225 million per year of local dollars into the program.

ACWA also commends the proposal by Rep. Grace Napolitano, Chair of the House Water and Power subcommittee that the Obama Administration commit to establishing a \$200 million Title XVI Program foundation with a goal of creating up to 1 million acre-feet of water within a timeframe of the next 48 to 60 months.

California is more than prepared to pay its share of the costs of this urgently needed comprehensive program. In the past decade, California voters and water rate payers have invested billions for better water management and ecosystem improvements in our state. The recent legislation includes not only four policy bills, but also an \$11 billion bond. If approved by the voters in November, the “Safe, Clean, and Reliable Drinking Water Supply Act of 2010” would provide the largest financial boost in history—more than \$4 billion for local resource development including additional water recycling. The remaining funds in the bond would help finance habitat restoration in the Delta watershed improvements statewide (about \$4 billion), and public benefits from new storage infrastructure (\$3 billion).

The California bills before you today are one important part of the comprehensive solution that ACWA’s members are seeking. ACWA believes the projects contained within S 1138, HR 2522, and HR 637 can provide vital water supply and other benefits. If fully appropriated, these projects combined would leverage \$116.7 million in federal funding with \$371.1 million in local funding. And perhaps most importantly, as the WateReuse Association has previously testified to this subcommittee, other significant project benefits could include: “Environmental benefits realized through the conversion of treated wastewater into a valuable new water supply; Reduction of the quantity of treated wastewater discharged to sensitive or impaired surface waters; Reduced dependence on the Colorado River and on the Bay-Delta System, especially during drought years when conflicts on both of these water systems are particularly intense; Creation of a dependable and controllable local source of supply; Reduced demand on existing potable supplies; and Energy benefits realized by the replacement of more energy intensive water supplies such as pumped imported water with less energy intensive water sources like recycled water.” *

Conclusion

Madame Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony today. In summary: ACWA is pleased to favor the California bills before you today as one important part of a comprehensive solution to achieving the co-equal goals of restoring environmental health and providing a more reliable water supply to California. This completes my statement. At the appropriate time, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

*Testimony The Bureau of Reclamation’s Reuse and Recycling Program

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