

Statement of Tom W. Davis, General Manager
Yuma County Water Users' Association
Before the
U. S. House of Representatives
Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans
H.R. 1107, *The Bureau of Reclamation Transparency Act*
June 25, 2015

Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Huffman, and members of the subcommittee, my name is Tom Davis; I am the General Manager of the Yuma County Water Users' Association in Yuma, AZ. Thank you for inviting me to testify on H.R. 1107, *The Bureau of Reclamation Transparency Act*.

The Yuma County Water Users' Association is a private non-profit cooperation, incorporated in 1903. The Association operates and maintains the Valley Division of the Yuma Project under contract with the Bureau of Reclamation. The Valley Division has one of the oldest diversion rights from the Colorado River in Arizona.

I also sit on the Board of Directors of the National Water Resources Association and on the Advisory Council of the Family Farm Alliance. I am also Vice President of the Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona. I believe my testimony represents positions shared by the majority of the western irrigation districts, water user associations and family farms that comprise the membership of these advocacy organizations. It is these family farms through their respective water user organizations, who have repaid or are repaying the original construction cost and annual operation and maintenance on the majority of the federal facilities addressed in this Bill.

The Yuma County Water Users' Association supports H.R. 1107. An important step in addressing any problem is gaining an understanding of its scope and nature. Congressman Gosar's bill increases transparency by providing a better understanding of the major replacement and rehabilitation needs of Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation's) infrastructure assets. This legislation directs the agency to streamline and consolidate multiple reports in order to facilitate better management of the agency's infrastructure. H.R. 1107 focuses on two types of facilities. Section 4 of the bill addresses "Reserved Works". These facilities are owned by Reclamation with routine operation and maintenance being performed by Reclamation employees or by contract with non-Federal entities. Section 5 of the Bill addresses "Transferred Works". These facilities are also owned by Reclamation, but routine operation and maintenance is performed under contract by a non-federal entity, usually a water user organization like the one I manage.

Excluding the main stem dams and some diversion facilities, the majority of Reclamation facilities are transferred works as defined in Section 5 of this bill. The water user organizations have contracted to perform the routine operation and maintenance of these facilities, in most cases, for several decades. By contract, these facilities are inspected by Reclamation on a periodic basis depending on the feature being inspected to

evaluate safety and maintenance needs. A report on the results of the inspection is prepared and submitted to the water user organization. A maintenance schedule is agreed to by Reclamation and the water user organization and the water user organization pays the cost and performs the necessary maintenance items.

Major replacement and rehabilitation needs are those items that are over and above the routine maintenance needs described above. These needs are not a result of a lack of ordinary maintenance but are the result of age of the facility. I, like many other managers, operate facilities that are one hundred plus years old. No matter how adequate annual maintenance has been, after one hundred years of operation, major replacement and rehabilitation of some facilities are necessary.

My association recognizes that our nation needs to address its aging infrastructure problems. Specifically, we are most concerned with the condition of our country's water supply assets. This infrastructure is of critical importance to the U.S. economy and provides millions of citizens with essential and beneficial services, including: clean drinking water, water for agriculture, economic development and employment, recreational opportunities, water for wildlife habitat, power generation and flood control.

A majority of Reclamation's water infrastructure is between 50 and 100 years old. It includes approximately 90 percent of the dams constructed by Reclamation. The engineers of generations past did commendable work and much of our nation's existing water storage and delivery infrastructure has lived well beyond its initial design life. However, no matter how well something is built after one hundred years of operation major replacement and rehabilitation of some facilities are necessary.

The most recent infrastructure report card developed by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) gives America's dams and drinking water infrastructure a D. The Association of State Dam Officials estimates that it will require an investment of approximately \$21 billion to repair our nation's federal and non-federal dams. The cost to rebuild Reclamation's infrastructure assets would be more than \$100 billion. In 2012, Reclamation alone had an estimated repair need of \$2.6 billion. These are daunting numbers. However, these dollar figures fail to capture the fact that much of this infrastructure is actually irreplaceable; and its true value is much greater.

The Yuma County Water Users' Association recognizes that federal funding is limited and knows that the federal government must allocate funds in a fiscally responsible manner. We believe that an investment in our nation's water infrastructure is a responsible investment in the nation's economy and contributes to our national security. Adoption of H.R. 1107 is central component to addressing Reclamation's aging infrastructure needs. It will provide the necessary inventory for use by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Congress to better enable all parties to assess future funding needs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I will answer any questions at the appropriate time.