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February 24, 2016

The House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans held a hearing to discuss the state of California's water supply. The hearing centered on the main reasons for the decreased water supply in California, with some witnesses pointing to the El Niño-induced drought and others blaming strict environmental regulations surrounding the survival of the delta smelt, an endangered fish native to California.

During his opening statement, Representative Jim Costa (D-CA) called the water system in California broken, claiming the failure to be both a state and federal issue due to the country's heavy reliance on the state for agricultural products. Rep. Costa also mentioned that current groundwater withdrawals in the state are unsustainable and regulation controls are not using the best available science. Witnesses, however, disagreed as to the reasons for the drought. The Honorable Brett Barbre of the Orange County Municipal Water District explained that much of California is an irrigated desert that is only habitable through extensive damming and storage, of which there is currently not enough. Whereas David Murrillo of the Bureau of Reclamation stated that the decrease in snowpack and rainfall were to blame for California's drought, and Tom Birmingham of the Westlands Water District blamed the shortage on preservation efforts for the delta smelt.

The hearing ended with witnesses and Members of Congress no closer to solving California's water supply issue, a signal that more debate is to come on the issue.

Sources: House Committee on Natural Resources
