

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2016

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop:

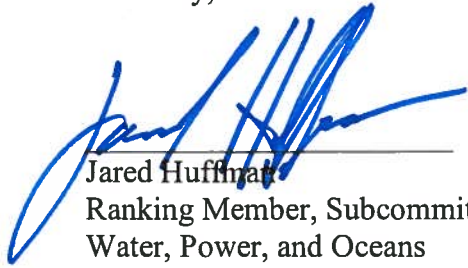
We write to urge you to hold an oversight hearing examining the recently reached drainage settlement agreement between the federal government and the Westlands Water District. As you know, part of the settlement agreement involves transferring responsibility for providing agricultural drainage services from the federal government to the Westlands Water District (Westlands). The federal government has estimated the cost of providing drainage services to be approximately \$3.5 billion.

Recent findings by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) cast serious doubt on Westlands' ability to pay for drainage services and on the wisdom of entering into an agreement with the Westlands Water District. The SEC found that Westlands recently misled its investors about its financial condition when issuing a bond offering. Westlands filed false financial statements that covered up the fact that it had insufficient revenues to cover its debt coverage obligations. Further, the General Manager of the Westlands Water District, Thomas Birmingham, was found to have said to other Westlands members that they were engaged in "a little Enron accounting." These revelations raise serious questions about Westlands' ability to pay for drainage and the honesty of Westlands' current leadership. As such, we request that any Westlands representative testifying before the Natural Resources Committee be sworn in to testify under oath.


Without appropriate drainage, agricultural drain water from the Westlands Water District can cause significant harm to water quality and the environment. Agricultural drain water from the Westlands Water District previously caused tremendous environmental damage at the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge, including significant death and deformity for waterfowl species at the Refuge. It is imperative that the Natural Resources Committee conduct appropriate oversight over the issue of drainage within the San Luis Unit and work toward an appropriate drainage solution.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter and hope the Committee will examine these issues in the very near future.

Sincerely,



Jared Huffman
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Water, Power, and Oceans



Alan Lowenthal
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Energy and Mineral Resources



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Lois Capps
Member of Congress