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**Testimony and Statement of Kevin Walsh
General Manager, Goleta Water District
Before the U.S House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Water and Power
H.R. 3323
The Goleta Water Distribution System Conveyance Act of 2007
October 24, 2007**

Good morning, my name is Kevin Walsh. I am the General Manager of the Goleta Water District. I am here today on behalf of the Board of Directors and customers of the Goleta Water District to provide background and information in support of H.R. 3323, legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey a water distribution system to the Goleta Water District.

We strongly support this legislation and thank the committee for considering it today.

Goleta Water District

The Goleta Water District is located in Santa Barbara County, California. The District serves irrigation water to about 8,000 acres of farmland, and municipal water to about 80,000 people. Most of that water, about two-thirds, comes from the federal Cachuma Project.

In 1956 the US Bureau of Reclamation completed the congressionally authorized Cachuma Project, a dam and reservoir storage project in Santa Barbara County. This project serves the City of Santa Barbara and four water Districts, including the Goleta Water District, with irrigation and municipal water. The costs for this project are being repaid to the federal government.

While the dam and reservoir were under construction, the Bureau also gave loans for construction of water distribution systems. Goleta Water District received one of those loans to construct a water pipeline distribution system and obtain rights-of-way for the pipelines. This forty year loan was completely repaid to the federal government, in full, in 2002. Since the completion of the construction of the distribution system, and in accordance with the terms of the loan, the Goleta Water District has assumed complete responsibility for the water distribution system and the easements, including paying all operation and maintenance costs, in addition to repaying the loan in full.

Since the loan is paid off, the District would now like to obtain title to the facilities for which it paid. It is not unlike paying off a mortgage, only in this case federal law provides that an act of Congress is necessary to convey ownership and make the title transfer.

H.R. 3323, the Goleta Water Distribution System Conveyance Act of 2007

H.R. 3323 would authorize the Secretary of Interior to convey title of the federally owned water distribution system, along with its 1,113 associated easements, to the Goleta Water District.

Title Transfer Process

It has been a continuing desire of the District to obtain title to the Distribution System plus its associated easements as outlined in the legislation, which have been owned by the United States for many years. Since 2004 when the District sent a Letter of Intent to Transfer Title, the Bureau and the District have worked cooperatively and successfully to address all of the elements necessary to bring this legislation forward, including repayment of the Bureau of Reclamation loan, public meetings, and the completion of an Environmental Assessment Report resulting in a Finding of No Significant Impact.

Most recently we have worked with Congresswoman Capps to introduce this legislation to achieve title transfer.

Benefits of This Title Transfer

The title transfer will give the District more local control of the Distribution System which was constructed for our use. There will be one less administrative layer caused by United States ownership when changes or improvements to the facilities are needed. Private citizens whose property is encumbered with the easements will no longer have to deal with the federal government, but only their local water District when making use changes to their properties. The Bureau of Reclamation will no longer need to complete periodic reviews of these transferred facilities. As a result, they will hopefully be able to direct personnel and resources to more important activities. Also, the Bureau of Reclamation will divest itself of liability for the distribution system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to thank some of the people who have made this transfer possible. I would like to thank Bureau of Reclamation staff Sheryl Carter of the South Central California Area Office in Fresno and James Hess here in Washington who have helped us in preparing for the title transfer.

We'd like to acknowledge our debt of gratitude to Congresswoman Lois Capps for her support and assistance with this legislation.

In summary, H.R. 3323 is a good bill, a good title transfer, and shows a cooperative process of benefit to both Reclamation and the District. I urge the Committee to move this legislation forward.

At this point I would ask you to include additional information about the proposed facilities in the record.

I'd like to thank the Chairwoman and the subcommittee members for considering this legislation.

This concludes my testimony; I would be pleased to answer any questions.