- My name in Maria Gutierrez…. **(short introductory paragraph.)**

- I'm a Latina and Latinos are respectful. So, I want to be respectful to of each of you individually and of the body you represent. Having said that, I want to speak candidly. Forgive me if I am harsh, but the truth is harsh.

- For the Latino community in California's Central Valley, the Endangered Species Act is just a euphemism that means my people and my community are going to be devastated. The Endangered Species Act for Central Valley Latinos is a recipe for economic and personal disaster.

- No one wants to kill any animals unnecessarily -- endangered or not. I certainly don't. But I believe every law must be weighed on its entire set of consequences -- to animals and to humans. And in the Valley, ESA means little or no improvement in the fate of species but clear, inevitable and devastating effects on humans -- especially Latinos, who make up the vast majority of the Valley's most economically vulnerable population.

- In 2009, the Bureau of Reclamation shut off Valley water to Valley agriculture … **(pause)** to protect a minnow. The Latino community suffered first and the most. The jobs ended, families were torn apart and great damage was done at every level of the economy. Homes were foreclosed. Businesses went under. In some communities unemployment rates skyrocketed to over 40%.

- In 2009, the Latinos of the Central Valley came to Congress and others, hat in hand, and said, "Our Community is suffering; we badly

need relief." Our plea fell on deaf ears. My community feels like it was ignored and marginalized… (pause) to protect a minnow.

- And now we know 2009 was just a prelude to today's devastating cuts. This year, over 800,000 acre feet of fresh water was flushed out to sea as a result of decisions made under the ESA. Now, reservoirs are running dry and given current projections the Central Valley Agriculture will likely receive a 0% water allocation.

- This time we have a new strategy. Water is vital to our culture and our future, there's not enough and we can't take our share for granted. Every decision -- ESA-related or otherwise -- that cuts off water hurts us. So we need to pay attention and engage in the debate. Especially now when the Latino community's voice has never been stronger.

- A major media campaign called El Agua Es Asunto De Todos – Water is Everybody's Business - has emerged in the Central Valley. Our group's message is being delivered via Spanish language media. The purpose is to encourage the Latino community to engage and get involved in the water debate – a debate that has been created as a direct result of the ESA.

- The leader of that effort is with us today and I'd like to acknowledge her. **(Introduce Martha)**

- Not long ago, a poll was taken to judge the effectiveness of El Agua Es Asunto De Todos' media campaign. I will share with you some of

the poll's results and you will be able to make a judgment about Central Valley Latino's views on the Endangered Species Act.

- When it comes to priorities, Valley Latinos overwhelmingly prefer to "give Valley agriculture the water it needs" rather than divert water to protect an endangered fish. The 78% to 3 % margin in favor of water for agriculture and its jobs over fish protection is nearly universal.

  In fact, the feeling in favor of water for placing farms and families ahead of fish is so strong that among 93% of Latino registered voters, who identify themselves as Democrats, a 54% majority would support a politician who was willing to work solve our Valley's water crisis but promoting pro-agriculture, pro-jobs water priorities regardless of their party. By a 2 to 1 margin (54% to 23%), the Latino community has said it will break partisan ranks to throw their support behind individuals working to place families and farms first and solve the Central Valley's water crisis.

- It's no secret many of Central California's water challenges have their roots in the Endangered Species Act. In the next month or so, you will hear that the El Agua es Asunto de Todos' media campaign has expanded throughout Southern California. Bringing a message encouraging Latinos to engage in the water debate.

- Can Latinos make a difference on water? I want to share with you some demographic basics about California's Latino population.

1. Nearly 40% of California's population is Latino. The largest demographic group in the state.

2. Latinos make up 50% of the population in California's Central Valley.

3. The Latino population of Los Angeles County is 50%. Nearly 5 million Latinos.

4. Nationally, Latinos are the United States largest minority group and among its fastest growing populations - Latino population growth between 2000 and 2010 accounted for more than half of the nation's population growth.

5. According to the 2011 Census, eight states have a Hispanic population of over one million people (California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, and Colorado). However, the states with the fastest growing Latino populations are not in the Southwest or along the Southern border. They are states like: Alabama (158%), South Dakota (129%), Maryland (112%) and Georgia (103%).

We have numbers and we have influence.

- We believe that when the Latino community in California fully engages in the water debate they will come to an obvious conclusion. We need a common sense solutions that provide a reliable water supply and that take a balanced approach providing for our communities and preserving our environment for future generations.

- In closing let me say, in our Valley we are proud of what we do. We are proud of our contribution. We grow crops that feed the world. We

do it in a modern, scientific, sustainable way. We are good stewards of mother earth.

- Lastly, I want to relay a personal story. It is often said that the San Joaquin valley feeds the world. However, in 2009 because of the effects of man-made drought caused by the Endangered Species Act, I was involved in putting together the largest food bank in the history of the Valley. Never again. Never again. Never again.