

PHMSA's. After all, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has power to impose civil penalties of a million dollars per day. Compare that to PHMSA's relatively paltry \$200,000 a day. But that doesn't explain PHMSA's failure to even start civil penalty cases.

Even as pipeline incidents increase, PHMSA started fewer civil penalty cases in 2014 than in the past 10 years and proposed 73 percent fewer fines. For the few fines that are proposed, PHMSA does that behind closed doors where the public is not welcome.

ExxonMobil dumped 63,000 gallons of oil into Yellowstone River in 2011 but managed to argue that the original \$1.7 million fine should be put down to \$1 million. Why did PHMSA allow this? Nobody knows.

Though I've talked about San Bruno, I want to emphasize that the lack of adequate pipeline safety measures is a nationwide problem, not a Bay Area or California problem. In 2011, a leak from an 83-year-old cast-iron main in Allentown, Pennsylvania, caused a blast that killed 5 people. In 2012, a gas pipeline explosion outside of Charleston, West Virginia, destroyed several properties. In 2014, a leak in a 127-year-old pipeline in Harlem, New York, killed 8 and injured 50 more. In each incident, we see the same, recurring problems—aging infrastructure and inadequate inspection. How many more of these tragedies do we need before we get serious about pipeline safety?

The saddest part about this whole situation is that we know how to prevent pipeline leaks and explosions. The National Transportation Safety Board has been saying the same thing for years, after so many deaths and the destruction of property and the environment. We need automatic or remote control shutoff valves. We need existing pipelines to accommodate internal inspection tools. We need PHMSA to be a strong voice for safety for the public and we need industry to cease being apologists for lethal incompetence.

Like so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I'm tired of PHMSA's excuses and prevarications. I'm frustrated that Congress seems powerless to induce PHMSA to take its job seriously. That's why I'm looking into legislation that will provide PHMSA with the proper encouragement to do its job. It's time for the toothless kitten to wake up, smell the leaking gas, and take decisive action.

SAVE OUR WATER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, California is now in the fourth year of the worst drought on record. Hydrologists estimate it is the worst drought in 1,200 years. The Sierra snowpack today is just 5 percent of normal. One of our largest reservoirs, the New Melones Reservoir on the Stanislaus River, is at just 22 percent of its capacity, with the rainy season now officially over.

Water rationing is in effect in many communities. Many Californians face \$500 fines if they take too long in the

shower or spill a gallon of water on their sidewalks. And yet in the last several weeks, the Bureau of Reclamation has released about 10 billion gallons of what precious little water remains behind the New Melones Dam in order to nudge a handful of steelhead trout toward the ocean. That is enough water to meet the annual residential needs of a human population of about 300,000 for the whole year.

How many fish are affected? Well, biologists estimate that it will affect the offspring of about 29 steelhead trout on the Stanislaus River, a few hundred smolts, almost all of which will be eaten by predators long before they reach the ocean; and that assumes that they won't swim toward the ocean on their own, as they have been doing without our helpful assistance since time immemorial.

Put in financial terms, with water selling for \$700 per acre-foot, the cost of this ridiculous exercise is about \$21 million. But the real cost will be felt in the fall if the rains don't return. At that point, these releases guarantee there will be no water left for human beings or for fish.

All this occurs after a compromise without which Lake Tulloch, below New Melones, would have been drained below the water intake pipes that serve a population of nearly 10,000 human beings.

When are we going to wake up to the lunacy of these current environmental laws and the ideological zealots who are administering them? Who in his right mind would dump enough water to meet the annual residential needs of a population of 300,000 human beings in order to nudge toward the ocean the offspring of maybe 29 steelhead trout—it could be as few as 6—in the worst drought in 12 centuries? Yet that is precisely the policy of this administration.

President Obama has authority under the existing Endangered Species Act to convene a process to suspend these laws during the drought. Governor Brown also has the authority to request the President to act, yet despite repeated calls to do so, neither has responded. Ironically, before we built these dams, in a drought like this, there would be no rivers and there would be no fish.

Nor is this waste limited to just one reservoir and one river. The Bureau of Reclamation is ordering pulse flows throughout the State, completely uncaring of the impact on the rapidly endangered species called homo sapiens.

Mr. Speaker, 3 weeks ago I introduced H.R. 1668, the Save Our Water Act. It simply provides that during an extreme drought the requirements of massive environmental pulse flows are suspended. I want to urge speedy consideration and passage of this act, but I fear it will not come in time to prevent the exhaustion of our remaining water supply.

I warned of this practice last year, and I appealed to State and Federal

water managers to suspend these water releases during the drought. Sadly, I was unable to rally much public interest, I think in large part because few people actually believed that our water policy could possibly be so foolish.

Well, they believe now. We are now reaching a crisis that can no longer be ignored, and Californians are now starting to realize that our environmental laws long ago passed from the realm of reason to the realm of ideological extremism.

Droughts are nature's fault. Water shortages are our fault. We once built dams to store water from wet years so that we would have it in dry ones, but the same radical environmental laws that are squandering our existing water supply have also obstructed the construction of any major new storage since 1979, while the State's population has nearly doubled.

Dr. Johnson once said that when a man is to be hanged in the morning, it concentrates his attention remarkably. Well, if any good comes out of this drought, it may be that the American people finally have awakened to the damage these laws have done and are ready to change them and change the zealots in government who are responsible for them.

□ 1030

AN UPDATE ON THE PUERTO RICO STATEHOOD ADMISSION PROCESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. PIERLUISI) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time this year, I rise to discuss Puerto Rico's political status.

I am an optimist about Puerto Rico's future. The island is blessed with natural beauty, a rich history, a vibrant culture, a sophisticated and diverse private sector, and talented and hard-working professionals who can compete with anyone, anywhere.

But my optimism is tempered by realism. Because to change the world for the better, you must first see the world as it is. And the reality is that Puerto Rico's potential is being squandered. Puerto Rico should be a blooming flower, but instead it is withering on the vine.

Puerto Rico is ensnared in the worst economic crisis in its history. The island's healthcare system is in a precarious state, the territory's homicide rate—despite recent improvements—still far exceeds that of any U.S. State, and residents of Puerto Rico are relocating to the States in record numbers.

I have heard it argued that leaders in Puerto Rico should concentrate solely on the immediate problems at hand and set aside the issue of political status until those problems are resolved or their severity is reduced. This argument has superficial appeal, but it is completely wrong. All of Puerto Rico's