

Washington, DC -- Fighting to protect local water resources from Hinckley Reservoir in Herkimer County to Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes, U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24) today led legislation through the House of Representatives to ensure efficient use of water resources and to maintain local water quality. Based on specific concerns he heard from constituents in his Upstate New York district, Arcuri successfully amended the legislation to study competing water supply uses.

“Over the last two weeks, I hosted 11 town hall meetings across my district and at every single meeting a water quality issue came up. Among the many challenges we face, none is more elemental than protecting our water,” said **Arcuri, during debate on the House floor.**

“Increases in population, growing energy demands, and shifting weather patterns jeopardize water supplies across the country. This bill would improve coordination on federal research by establishing an interagency committee to ensure federal agencies work together on critical water issues.”

As a member of the House Rules Committee, Arcuri led the debate allowing for the House of Representatives to vote on the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2009 (H.R. 1145). H.R. 1145 directs the President to implement a National Water Research and Development Initiative to improve federal, state and local government activities related to water research and development, as well as coordinate federal research on water resources. Arcuri also successfully amended the legislation to directly address local concerns regarding competing water supply uses.

Arcuri’s amendment to H.R. 1145 would improve understanding of competing water supply uses and how different uses interact with and impact each other. The amendment requires the interagency committee, established by the underlying legislation, to study how using water for one purpose, such as generating electricity, impacts or limits its use for other purposes, such as a drinking water source. The committee would develop a set of guidelines or principles for the most efficient way to balance competing uses. This information could then be used by agencies like those that manage Seneca Lake and Hinckley Reservoir to maximize the benefits of various water uses at each site, ensuring their continued ability to generate power, promote tourism and economic development without endangering the safety of those who rely on those bodies as a source of clean drinking water.

During debate, Arcuri specifically addressed the Hinckley Reservoir, which supplies water for 130,000 residents in the greater Utica area, as well as functioning as a source of hydropower, a

water supply for a canal, and a recreation site. An interagency feud between the Mohawk Valley Water Authority and the New York State Canal Corporation over rights to the water recently led to a grave situation whereby the Hinckley Reservoir drained to within 3 feet of disrupting the local water supply.

“A situation like we had in Hinckley is unacceptable – it is critical that we put measures in place to resolve conflicting objectives and poor communication between agencies,” **Arcuri continued** . “That is why I am offering an amendment that will require the interagency committee created by this bill to study competing water supply uses and how different uses interact and impact each other. Our water supply is invaluable in so many ways – not only for consumption, but for generation of electricity, production of food, transportation and recreation, just to name a few. We must be sure to balance these competing interests in an efficient and equitable way.”

On the other side of Arcuri’s district, is New York’s Finger Lakes region, including Seneca Lake, the water source for the Seneca Falls Power Company. The lake is also located on the Seneca-Cayuga Canal that connects Seneca Lake to the Erie Canal. A number of different State and Federal agencies are involved in management of the water in Seneca Lake. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regulates use of the water in the lake and the NYS Canal Corporation oversees the Seneca-Cayuga Canal. The Seneca Falls Power Company is further regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. An interagency study on competing water usage, as included in Arcuri’s amendment, would be invaluable to ensure cooperation between these agencies and protecting this critical local resource.

Currently, over twenty federal agencies carry out research and development on some aspect of water supply, water quality or water management nationwide. The National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2009 (H.R. 1145) would coordinate national research and development efforts on water and provides a clear path forward to ensure adequate water supplies for generations to come. The bill requires the President to establish or designate an interagency committee with representation from all Federal agencies dealing with water to implement a National Water Research and Development Initiative to improve Federal activities related to water management, including research, development, demonstration, data collection and dissemination, education, and technology transfer.

The interagency committee would be charged with: the implementation of a national water census; the development of new water technologies and techniques; the development of tools to facilitate water resource conflicts; the development of information technology systems to enhance water quality and supply; the improvement of hydrologic prediction models; gaining a better understanding related to ecosystem services; and an analyses of the energy-water

nexus.

To provide technical and administrative support, the bill creates a National Water Initiative Coordination Office. The Office would disseminate information to the public and serve as a point of contact for the Initiative. The bill authorizes \$2 million per year to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for coordination and outreach activities undertaken by the National Water Initiative Coordination Office.

H.R. 1145 passed the House of Representatives this afternoon with bipartisan support. The legislation must be approved by the Senate and signed by the President before taking effect. H.R. 1145 has been endorsed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Water Innovations Alliance, Natural Resources Defense Council, Water Environment Research Foundation, Council of Scientific Society Presidents, Food & Water Watch, Water Research Foundation, Alliance Environmental, and Clean Water Action.

Arcuri's remarks on the floor of the House in support of H.R. 1145 are included below:

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)
In the House of Representatives
Rule for Consideration of H.R. 1145
Opening Statement

April 23, 2009

M. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 352 and ask for its immediate consideration.

For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Diaz-Balart. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have five legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the Record.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

M. Speaker, H. Res. 352 provides for a structured rule for consideration of H.R. 1145, the “National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2009.”

M. Speaker, among the many challenges we face, none is more elemental than protecting our water. Increases in population, growing energy demands, and shifting weather patterns jeopardize water supplies across the country. Water is essential and irreplaceable, but many Americans are unaware that supplies across the country are at risk.

It is critical that we coordinate the efficient use of water resources and maintain water quality. Competent water management is essential if we are to meet the competing needs of transportation, industry, agriculture, recreation and power production. But currently more than 20 federal agencies carry out research and development on some aspect of water supply, water quality or water management.

H.R. 1145 would address this issue by creating a National Water Research and Development Initiative to improve federal, state and local government activities related to water research and development. The bill would improve coordination on federal research by establishing an interagency committee to ensure federal agencies work together on critical water issues.

Lack of coordination and competing interests frequently strain agencies and local communities tasked with managing a limited water supply. A perfect example of this problem can be found in my district in Upstate New York, where the Hinckley Reservoir supplies water for 130,000 residents in my hometown of Utica. But as with most bodies of water, the reservoir serves multiple uses – not just as a source of drinking water, but a source of hydropower, a water supply for a canal, and a recreation site.

After years of battle between the local water authority and the state canal corporation over rights to the water, a couple of summers ago the Hinckley Reservoir drained to within 3 feet of disrupting the water supply. The low reservoir level impacted hydropower generation at a local power facility and jeopardized drinking water safety. A situation like this is unacceptable – it is

critical that we put measures in place to resolve conflicting objectives and poor communication between agencies.

That is why I am offering an amendment that will require the interagency committee created by this bill to study competing water supply uses and how different uses interact and impact each other. Our water supply is invaluable in so many ways – not only for consumption, but for generation of electricity, production of food, transportation and recreation, just to name a few. We must be sure to balance these competing interests in an efficient and equitable way.

M. Speaker, I strongly support the National Water Research and Development Initiative Act. I hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will continue to support it as well.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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