



## U.S. Department of the Interior

**Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by  
The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Secretary of the Interior  
Groundbreaking of Joint Federal Project  
Folsom Dam and Reservoir  
Sacramento, California  
January 11, 2008**

Thank you, Governor (Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California)

The fundamental responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens. Here at Folsom Dam, all levels of American government – federal, state, and local – have joined in an historic partnership to meet this responsibility.

We are protecting the one million Americans who live in the Sacramento area from the threat of a devastating flood. We are protecting the capital of the state of California and its economy -- by itself the world's 8th largest economy. We are doing this at a savings of nearly \$1 billion below the original estimated cost. We are doing it seven years faster than originally estimated.

This is truly an historic moment. For the first time ever, the two federal agencies that oversee western dams and waters – the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers – have joined forces on a major dam project.

Working hand in hand with the Central Valley Flood Protection Board and the Sacramento Flood Control Agency, we will spend more than \$1.3 billion to shore up dikes and build a new spillway to drain off the huge influx of water from heavy storms that otherwise might threaten the citizens of Sacramento. It is the largest dam project currently being undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation anywhere in the country. It will support more than 2,200 new jobs in the Central Valley through 2014.

When we are done, Folsom Dam will protect Sacramento from a 200-year flood, two times greater than the current protection.

Short of building an ark, this is the best protection we can offer the citizens of Sacramento if it happens to rain for 40 days and 40 nights.

Stated simply, this project is an example of government working the way government should work. We are moving forward in a spirit of cooperation. We are being pro-active. We are anticipating future threats and taking action now rather than waiting for a crisis to occur.

Here in California last fall, we saw what we can accomplish when we are pro-active and we work together. The experts at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho predicted in advance that Santa Ana winds would potentially produce catastrophic fires. As a result, we were able to preposition our firefighters and resources. We significantly enhanced the ability of federal and state firefighters to combat the devastating fires that flared up only days later.

When I leave here today, I will travel to Southern California to tour areas damaged by the fires. We are concerned that heavy storms could cause mudslides in these areas.

As a result, the U.S. Geological Survey is undertaking an extensive program to map and monitor these areas. Just as we are doing here, our scientists will work jointly with the National Weather Service and the state of California to warn citizens if dangerous conditions arise that could lead to mudslides.

Recent years have demonstrated that the forces of nature – whether they be hurricanes, earthquakes or Santa Ana winds – continue to pose a major threat to our citizens. We are working hard to get ahead of Mother Nature.

The threat is well known here in Sacramento. Everything would be fine until the day the Pineapple Express or a major storm system dumps a ton of water into the basin and challenges the capacity of the dam and reservoir to hold it.

In essence, the hydrology of this basin is like a large bathtub with a small drain. We need a bigger drain. We need more secure dikes. With this project we will get the bigger drain. We will get the more secure dikes. We will get them at a favorable cost to taxpayers.

When was the last time you saw a headline saying that government had gotten something important done seven years early while saving nearly \$1 billion? Those are tomorrow's headlines.

Congratulations to all who worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition. This is truly a day for celebration.

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