

**Floor Statement of Rep. Ben Ray Lujan**  
**Safe Climate Caucus**  
**June 19, 2013**

Mr. Speaker, as we come to the house floor this morning, many communities across the West suffer from severe wildfires and they are having a more devastating impact due to extreme drought conditions this year.

In my home state of New Mexico, firefighters have bravely worked to battle a number of blazes and I extend my sincerest thanks for their tireless efforts.

With global climate change contributing to drier and hotter summers and more intense fire seasons, it is critical that we take steps to address the root causes of climate change, before it gets too late.

And while we should focus on the steps we must take to reduce greenhouse gases and encourage every conservation, we must also ensure that we are preparing for the drought conditions that will continue to impact our communities in the years to come.

The National Integrated Drought Information System is an important tool in this effort. This program collects and consolidates drought related data and information, it operates regional drought early warning system pilot projects across the country.

Authorization for this program is currently scheduled to end this year. That is why I am working on a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System for another four years.

This will enable the Federal government to further develop regional drought early warning systems and identify research, monitoring and forecasting needs that can help farmers and firefighters alike.

Because whether it's growing crops and raising livestock or battling wildfires in the west, drought conditions in the coming years will continue to pose challenges for our communities, and we will need to do all we can to assist those whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by climate change.

Mr. Speaker, today I am also offering an amendment to be able to provide grant authorization to any small predominantly Hispanic communities across northern New Mexico that are in these areas where these waterways have been carved through our mountains through our watersheds to provide opportunity to small farmers rural communities all across New Mexico called Acequias. For many years local farmers in New Mexico have been asking for an amendment that would allow Acequian community ditch association to access equip funds.

An Acequia is a centuries old irrigation structure and is still in use today providing opportunities for many private landowners across New Mexico and southern Colorado.

The board of private landowners also called the Acequian community ditch association is in charge of administering maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure which often requires work on sections of the ditch, of the Acequia, on private land.

These small community ditch association do not have the authority to levy taxes, and that is why I am asking for members to please consider and offer your support on this amendment today, members who are watching and tuning into CSPAN this morning as well as offices, please take a look at this amendment. We need your help in New Mexico, and our farmers would certainly appreciate the kind support of members of Congress.

So thank you so much Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do, and let's make sure we can get this done on behalf of people who are struggling and working all across America today.