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Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION/WATER QUALITY
EPA/Kansas/Non-Point Source/Nutrients

On June 30, Governor Laura Kelley (D-KS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the award of $750,000 to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). The Farmer to Farmer grant funding helps develop innovative practices within farming communities that benefit the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico downstream, including collaborative efforts to reduce nutrient pollution from nonpoint sources. The KDHE project "supports improving water quality, habitat, resilience, and peer-to-peer information exchange among farmers to benefit people and ecosystems."

Governor Kelly said: "This $750,000 in grants will help our agriculture community improve water quality and protect our environment. I want to thank the EPA for their partnership, and KDHE for working with our communities to distribute these funds." Acting EPA Region 7 Administrator Edward Chu said: "It is critically important that we work with states, nonprofits, the private sector, and farmers to reduce agriculture-related nutrients in our waters. The Farmer to Farmer program generates ideas and action by targeting funds on local solutions where we can make the greatest difference. I'm pleased that this funding will go to educate and empower farmers to implement best practices in their operations to reduce nutrient loads and improve water quality in local watersheds." https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES
NASA/Data

On June 30, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) announced the next phase of the Surface Water and Ocean Topography (SWOT) mission after delivering the scientific heart of the satellite to France for further construction. The SWOT mission will measure the height of water, monitor changes in floodplains and wetlands, track regional shifts in sea level, measure small-scale ocean currents, and measure how much fresh water flows into and out of lakes and rivers and back to the ocean. The satellite, which could launch as early as November 2022, is a collaborative effort between NASA and the space agencies in France, Canada, and the United Kingdom. https://swot.jpl.nasa.gov/news/

USDA/NIDIS/Drought

On July 1, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Climate Hubs, in collaboration with the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska, and the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), requested input from states, tribes and others to collect Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) on drought impacts on landowners across the country. The CMOR mobile-friendly tool enables water managers and landowners to comment on how drought is impacting crops, livestock, wells, residences, municipal supply, hydropower, public health, recreation and tourism, business and industry, fires, forests, wildlife habitat, and fish. These ground observations help inform drought monitoring research and provide input to the U.S. Drought Monitor process, informing agencies that make decisions based on dry and wet conditions. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov

USGS/Kansas

On July 6, the U.S. Geological Survey announced a dye tracing study on the Kansas River to improve understanding of streamflow velocities and travel times. The announcement notes that water resource managers use this information to respond to harmful algal blooms or contaminant spills that make the water unsafe for public use. Two other experiments in the study took place in September 2020 and April 2021. Tom Stiles, Bureau of Water Director at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said: "Recent events with spills above intakes in rivers have pointed out the need for travel-time data to monitor and respond appropriately. With so many people dependent upon surface water supplies in Kansas, understanding how those rivers move is critical to proper water management."

CONGRESS
FY2022 Appropriations/Agriculture

On July 2, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 4356) was both introduced and reported out of the House Committee on Appropriations.

Title II contains the Farm Production and Conservation Programs. Funding for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) includes conservation operations ($894M), watershed and flood prevention operations ($160M), and the watershed rehabilitation program ($10M). Under Title VII, section 759 would appropriate $5M for a pilot program "to provide grants to a regional consortium to fund technical assistance and construction of regional wastewater systems for historically impoverished communities that have had difficulty in installing traditional wastewater treatment systems due to soil conditions." Section 764 would appropriate $2M "to develop a public-private cooperative framework based on open data standards for neutral data repository solutions to preserve and share the big data generated by technological advancements in the agriculture industry and for the preservation and curation of data in collaboration with land-grant universities."

FY2022 Appropriations/Interior

On July 6, the House Appropriations Committee reported the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 4372) with appropriations for FY2022. For the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the bill would appropriate $75.8M for implementation of Indian land and water rights settlements. For the U.S. Geological Survey, $1.6B would be appropriated for surveys, investigations, and research, including $84.8M for satellite operations and $84.7M for deferred maintenance and capital improvement projects. The bill limits the use of the funds to no more than "half the cost of topographic mapping or water resources data collection and investigations carried on in cooperation with States and municipalities."

For EPA, the bill would appropriate $5.3B for State and Tribal Assistance Grants, which includes, among other programs: (1) $1.87B for Clean Water SRFs; (2) $1.36B for Drinking Water SRFs; (3) $36.2M for 25% cost matching grants to the State of Alaska to address drinking water and wastewater needs of rural and Alaska Native Villages; (4) $4M for the Gold King Mine water quality program; (5) $20M for CWA §104(b)(8) grants to non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance and training for rural, small, and tribal municipalities and publicly owned treatment works; and (6) $60M for CWA §221 sewer overflow and stormwater reuse municipal grants. Section 419 requires SRF projects to use iron and steel products made in the U.S. The bill includes $72.1M for WIFIA loans, plus another $8M for loan administrative expenses.

For U.S. Forest Service management, $321.4M would be appropriated for hazardous fuels management, and $2.1B for emergency wildland fire suppression and emergency rehabilitation of burned forest lands and water, with an additional $2.12B for a wildfire suppression operations reserve fund that can be merged between the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture. For wildland fire management, the Department of the Interior appropriation would be $1.11B for fire preparedness, suppression operations, research, emergency rehabilitation, and fuels management, with an additional $330M for a wildfire suppression operations reserve fund.

Infrastructure

On July 1, the House passed the INVEST in America Act (H.R. 3684) by a predominantly partisan vote of 221-201. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee fact sheet notes that the bill would authorize $53B for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), and $40B for the Clean Water SRF. It directs EPA to set per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) national standards within two years. It would authorize $45B to replace lead service lines, $2B for stormwater and sewer overflow projects, $2.5B for state water pollution control programs, and $1B for alternative water source and water recycling projects to augment existing water supplies. It provides funding for technical assistance for small, rural, and tribal communities. It would also establish a new grant program for failing septic systems and communities that lack access to adequate sewage treatment systems. https://transportation.house.gov/news/press-releases/

WATER QUALITY

California/PFAS/Groundwater

On June 30, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) and the City of Fullerton announced that they had begun operation of their first wellhead filtration treatment plant to remove perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) from local well water. In 2020, several OCWD wells "were removed from service after the state of California lowered the Response Level advisories of PFOA and PFOS. This drove local water suppliers to rely on imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River to meet the needs of their customers." Beginning in November 2020, they constructed a treatment facility to remove PFOA and PFOS to meet state and federal drinking water standards. The new treatment plant "uses an ion exchange treatment system made of highly porous resin that acts like powerful magnets that adsorb and hold onto contaminants." OCWD Director and Fullerton Mayor Bruce Whitaker said: "Bringing this treatment facility online is very important. It means Fullerton can increase its use of local groundwater, which is less expensive and more reliable than imported water." OCWD and public water agencies "filed a lawsuit against the manufacturers of PFAS, seeking to protect ratepayers and ensure that the associated costs, including but not limited to treatment and replacement water, are borne by the companies that developed and manufactured PFAS." https://www.ocwd.com/media/9906/kimberly-pfas-treatment-facility.pdf