



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **ADMINISTRATION/WATER QUALITY** **EPA/WIFIA/Infrastructure**

On December 3, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) named 39 new projects across 24 states invited to apply for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans. EPA has \$6.7B for WIFIA loans to help finance over \$15B in water infrastructure. EPA invited two states, Indiana and New Jersey, to apply for \$472M in loans through EPA's state infrastructure financing authority WIFIA (SWIFIA) program. State entities authorized to carry out the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) are eligible borrowers. "These programs will combine state resources, annual capitalization grants, and the low-cost, flexible SWIFIA loans to accelerate investment in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure to modernize aging systems and tackle new contaminants."

EPA received 50 letters of interest from public and private entities, and from state infrastructure financing authorities, in response to the 2021 notices of funding availability. Of the 39 projects accepted as eligible to apply, 21 of them are located in western states. Projects proposed in California include: (1) \$68M for microgrid and system improvements at Rialto Water Service LLC; (2) \$618M for wastewater capital plan resilience projects at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; (3) \$575M for the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project at the Santa Clara Valley Water District; (4) \$80M for the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program at the Santa Clara Valley Water District; (5) \$22M for recycled water conversion at the Santa Margarita Water District; (6) \$52M for the Santa Felicia Safety Improvement Project at the United Water Conservation District; (7) \$177M for the Watershed Connect project at the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed Infrastructure Financing Authority; (8) \$164M for the Santa Cruz Water Program; (9) \$16M for the Drinking Water Reliability Project at the Helix Water District; and (10) \$11M for the Marin Municipal Water District. Colorado projects include: (11) \$130M for the Water2025 Project in the City of Westminster; and (12) \$39M for the Ridgway Water Treatment Plant at the Project 7 Water Authority. In Kansas, (13) \$181M for the Wastewater Reclamation Facilities Biological Nutrient Removal Improvements Project in the City of Wichita. In Idaho, (14) \$272M for water renewal services capital investments projects in

the City of Boise. Proposed projects in Oregon include: (15) \$36M for a 7 million gallons/day water treatment plant in the City of Ashland; (16) \$12M for water rehabilitation, resiliency and improvement projects in Oregon City; (17) \$76M for the Lake Oswego Wastewater Treatment Replacement Project at the EPCOR Foothills Water Project Inc.; and (18) \$16M for the Water System Upgrades Program at the Tualatin Valley Water District. In Washington, (19) \$136M for the Post Point Resource Recovery Plant Biosolids Project in the City of Bellingham; and (20) a \$287M Master Agreement in King County. In Texas, (21) \$14M for Sharyland Water Supply Corporation Water System infrastructure improvements. Another four proposed projects have been added to the wait list, including Colorado (\$464M for the Northern Integrated Supply Project - Glade Reservoir Complex), Utah (\$893M for the Utah Lake Restoration Project), and South Dakota (\$20M for the Sioux City Biosolids to Fertilizer Project).

### **CONGRESS** **Continuing Resolution**

On December 2, Congress passed a continuing resolution, the Further Extending Government Funding Act (H.R. 6119). The bill provides continuing FY22 appropriations to federal agencies through February 18, 2022, and funds most programs and activities at FY21 levels. The House passed the bill by a vote of 221-212, and the Senate passed by a vote of 69-28. The following day President Biden signed the bill into law (P.L. 117-70).

### **Workforce**

On December 1, the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations held a hearing to examine the federal government's recruitment and hiring policies and explore strategies to help build the next generation of public servants. In his opening statement, Chair Gerald Connelly (D-VA) said: "Only about 6.9% of federal employees are under the age of 30, compared to 23% in the private sector. Nearly 30% of federal employees are over the age of 55, with potentially one-third of the federal workforce eligible to retire over the next few years.... Despite years of effort, strategic human capital management of the federal workforce remains on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) High Risk List. GAO notes that myriad

items on their High Risk List are a result of the federal government's inability to close skill gaps and hire, train, and staff up particularly critical federal staff.... At this hearing we will focus on three areas that, taken together, will help government find and onboard early career talent, retain high-performing employees, and ensure that the federal government equitably serves all communities. These initiatives include: (1) more effectively leveraging federal internships as talent pools for early career civil servants; (2) offering greater workplace flexibilities and benefits to attract top-level talent to federal service – including telework flexibilities; and (3) ensuring that the federal workforce reflects the communities it serves – at all levels of government.”

Connelly introduced the Building the Next Generation of Federal Employees Act, which focuses on internships and recruitment. He said: “Federal agencies must be clear-eyed about meeting young people, government’s future leaders, where they’re at. It is ridiculous to think that anyone can walk up to a graduating student and invite them to a 30-year position with the government – and the student will accept. That is just not how things work anymore.”

## **WATER RESOURCES**

### **California/Drought**

On December 1, the California Department of Water Resources (CDWR) notified the 29 water agencies that contract for State Water Project (SWP) supplies that 2022 water deliveries would not be allocated through the typical process until they had a clearer picture of hydrologic conditions for the spring. The SWP is a multi-purpose water storage and delivery system of reservoirs, canals, and pipelines that extends through two-thirds of the state. About 30% of the water is used for irrigation, and 70% for residential, municipal, and industrial use. The annual allocation is based on available water storage and projected water supply demands, and is updated monthly through the winter and spring. In its news release, CDWR said it “is focused on prioritizing water supply in four categories: water for health and safety needs and Delta salinity control; water for endangered species; water to reserve in storage; and water for additional supply allocations if the hydrology allows.”

CDWR Director Karla Nemeth said: “Despite a wet start to the water year, conditions have dried out since that first storm and we are still planning for a below-average water year. That means we need to prepare now for a dry winter and severe drought conditions to continue through 2022. We will be working with our federal partners and SWP contractors to take a conservative planning approach to balance limited water supplies with the needs of residents, businesses, and the environment.”

## **Washington/Floods**

On December 3, Governor Jay Inslee (D-WA) sent a letter to Administrator Deanne Criswell at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), requesting swift consideration of his request for federal assistance with severe flooding damage under the Stafford Act. “Since these severe rainstorms first began on November 12, I have met with flood victims in Whatcom County and have had ongoing conversations with local elected officials, tribal government leaders, emergency response personnel, and community stakeholders from around Northwestern Washington. Through these engagements, one thing I have heard consistently is collective shock in the magnitude of these atmospheric events, causing historic water levels and damage in impacted communities. The record-breaking storms have included flooding, landslides, mudslides, and straight-line winds, causing evacuations, displacement, road and highway closures, and significant power outages. These have had a tremendous impact on people, businesses, agriculture, transportation systems, and the economy of Washington.” He noted several cities experienced their “wettest meteorological fall season (September 30-November 1) on record.” Inslee issued a severe weather emergency proclamation for fourteen counties on November 15, expanding the proclamation on November 19, and again on December 1, to authorize further assistance from state agencies and add another county. <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-letter-fema-requests-swift-consideration-flood-aid>

## **Washington/Water Reuse**

On December 8, the Washington State Legislative Task Force on Water Resource Mitigation held a hearing on water reuse. Michelle Bushman offered a western regional perspective based on the recent WSWC report, *Water Reuse in the West: Western State Water Reuse Governance and Programs*. Local water utility officials spoke on water reuse, recharge, and reclamation, including: Bob Hunter, Kitsap PUD; Morgan Johnson, Silverdale Water District; and Kevin Anderson, City of Airway Heights. For further information see: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/committeeschedules#/28559>.

## **MEETINGS**

### **WestFAST Webinar**

On December 15, at 10:00 am (MDT), WestFAST will host a webinar on post-fire landscapes and geologic hazards, especially debris flows and flooding, and discuss how climate change may impact risk. What can agencies do to increase preparedness? See: <https://westernstateswater.org/events/the-relationship-between-wildfires-geologic-hazards-and-climate-change/>.

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**The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.**