



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION **FY2023 Budget**

On March 28, President Biden released the \$5.8T FY2023 budget. The budget requested \$6.6B for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), including funds to improve resilience of water resources infrastructure to climate change through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The budget requested \$17.5B for the Department of the Interior (DOI) (a 19% increase of \$2.8B over the FY21 enacted level). The funding includes investments in western water infrastructure, wildfire management, tribal programs including Indian water rights settlements, drought resilience and implementation of the Drought Contingency Plans, water recycling and desalination programs, and abandoned mine land reclamation. At the end of FY21, the unobligated balance of the Reclamation Fund was \$18.1B, and is expected to increase to \$19.8B by the end of FY23.

For the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the budget requested \$11.9B (a 29% increase of \$2.6B). This included \$4B for water infrastructure, to upgrade drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, with a focus on underserved communities. "The Budget funds all of the authorizations in the original Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021, including the creation of 20 new targeted water grant programs and an increase of over \$160M above 2021 enacted levels for the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water grant program. The Budget also maintains funding for EPA's State Revolving Funds (SRF) at 2021 enacted levels, which would complement the \$23.4B provided for the traditional SRF programs in the [IIJA]." The budget also included: \$126M to tackle per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) pollution, to "increase the understanding of PFAS impacts to human health, as well as its ecological effects; restrict use to prevent PFAS from entering the air, land, and water; and remediate PFAS that have been released into the environment."

The budget requested \$28.5B in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (a 17% increase of \$4.2B over the FY21 enacted level.) The USDA budget highlighted funding for Forest Service Wildland Fire Management (\$4.9B) and multi-agency

climate hubs (\$24M) to leverage climate science and increase landowner awareness of efforts to combat climate change. The budget stated that it supports multi-agency efforts to integrate science-based tools into conservation planning. It also said: "The Administration looks forward to working this year with the Congress, partners, stakeholders, and the public to identify shared priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill."

The Department of Commerce request (\$11.7B, a 31% increase of \$2.8B) included \$6.9B for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The funding would support programs to improve NOAA's ability to predict extreme weather events associated with climate change, including \$2.3B for next generation weather satellites.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's request is \$26B (a 11% increase of \$2.7B) with \$2.4B for Earth-observing satellites and related research to provide a three-dimensional, holistic view of Earth to better understand natural hazards and climate change. See: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/>.

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES **EPA/WIFIA**

On March 24, EPA released its 2021 Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Annual Report. The press release said: "In 2021, the WIFIA program closed 31 loans totaling over \$5 billion to support nearly \$12 billion in water infrastructure projects. At the same time, borrowers saved \$1.5 billion and created nearly 40,000 jobs. The WIFIA program continues to broaden its reach by increasing the number of loans to borrowers with lower-rated credit, small communities, and underserved communities. Looking forward, the program has nearly 90 projects requesting over \$14 billion in funding. Additionally, to provide real time information about the WIFIA program, EPA is launching the WIFIA Fund Facts dashboard. This interactive web-based tool includes graphics and facts about closed and pending loans. Users can filter the data to get information by loan size, project type, geographic location, and loan status."

USBR/Rural Water Projects/Infrastructure

On March 31, the DOI announced the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) will invest \$420 million in rural water projects in FY2022. Construction activities include water treatment plants and intakes, pump systems, reservoirs, and pipeline connections to supply potable water to rural and tribal communities across six states: Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. "Rural water projects get to the heart of President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law by building resiliency and supporting local economies," said Secretary Deb Haaland. Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo, added, "The significant amount of funding for rural water construction...will help us expedite project completion." Speaking while in Albuquerque with New Mexico State Engineer Mike Hamman she highlighted \$160 million for the Eastern New Mexico Rural Water System that will supply some 70,000 people.

Other allocations include: \$75.5 million for the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System in South Dakota; \$57.5 million for the Rocky Boys/North Central Montana Rural Water System; \$51 million for the Garrison-Diversion Unit of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program in North Dakota; \$37 million for the recently authorized Musselshell-Judith Rural Water System in Montana; \$7 million for the Fort Peck Reservation – Dry Prairie Rural Water System in Montana and its tribal components; with another \$32 million in reserve for the potential acceleration of construction activities.

USGS/USBR/Lake Powell

On March 21, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the USBR released a report on Lake Powell's storage capacity, titled "Elevation-area-capacity relationships of Lake Powell 2018 and estimated loss of storage capacity since 1963." The USGS survey used "high-resolution multibeam bathymetry and lidar to create the equivalent of an underwater topographic map of the reservoir. The data were then combined to create a topobathymetric digital elevation model (TBDEM), a continuous representation of submerged bathymetry and subaerial topography."

The news release said: "The report confirms Lake Powell has lost 4% [1.1 million acre-feet] of its potential storage capacity since 1986, when the last survey was completed, and 6.79% [1.8 million acre-feet] since 1963, when the diversion tunnels of Glen Canyon Dam closed and the reservoir began to fill. The loss is largely due to sediments continuously transported by the Colorado and San Juan rivers settling on the reservoir bottom." See: <https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/lake-powells-storage-capacity-updated-first-time-1986>.

WATER RESOURCES

Idaho/Water Infrastructure

On March 28, Governor Brad Little (R-ID) signed HB769 into law, investing \$325M in water infrastructure. The Idaho Department of Water Resources will manage the funds to complete various water projects, including: (1) raising the Anderson Ranch dam; (2) finishing the pipeline to the Mountain Home Air Force Base; (3) water recharge on the Upper Snake River; and (4) replacing aging infrastructure for irrigation districts and canals. Governor Little said: "Water is the lifeblood of Idaho's economy.... We've done a great job of managing the resource, but we need to do more as our state grows and continually faces water scarcity. With these one-time investments, we can increase our storage capacity to better withstand drought years."

Kansas/Groundwater

On March 24, the University of Kansas published preliminary data compiled by the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS) showing that average groundwater levels dropped by more than a foot in 2021. "The KGS, based at the University of Kansas, and the Division of Water Resources (DWR) of the Kansas Department of Agriculture measure about 1,400 wells every year to monitor the health of the High Plains aquifer and other aquifers in western and central Kansas. Those measurements showed an overall average decline of 1.01 feet last year. Most parts of the region saw below-average precipitation for the year, especially during the summer growing season for agricultural crops.... The 2021 decline followed an overall drop of 0.93 feet in 2020, which was another abnormally dry year. Dry years lead to increased pumping demands, primarily for irrigation, which in turn typically cause greater declines in water levels." Most of Kansas continues to experience drought conditions in 2022. The article noted that most of the wells monitored by KGS and DWR are located in Groundwater Management Districts.

PEOPLE

Colorado Supreme Court Justice **Greg Hobbs**, a western water scholar and practitioner, passed away in November 2021. Hobbs was one of the conveners of Dividing the Waters, an educational program of the National Judicial College for judicial officers presiding over complex water litigation. On Thursday, April 7 at 10:00 am Pacific/11:00 am Mountain time Hobbs' friends will present an on-line tribute featuring his writings, poetry, and photography. Friends and admirers are invited to participate by registering here: <https://unr.zoom.us/join/register/tZlkc-qqrjogHN3EjgwJg8a28o3vVNGtwii8>.

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