



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **WESTERN GOVERNORS**

#### **North Dakota/Flooding**

On April 25, Governor Doug Burgum (R-ND) declared a statewide emergency following a three-day blizzard over April 12-14 that dropped over 30 inches of snow and brought 60 mph wind gusts, and a spring storm over April 22-24 that brought additional freezing rain and snow. The declaration notes that the “flood outlooks issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Weather Service (NWS) indicate significant river, tributary and overland flooding in the Sheyenne and Red River basins....” The order temporarily waives restrictions for levee construction, power restoration, and other flood fighting efforts.

Burgum plans to request presidential disaster declarations and seek federal assistance. He said: “From flooding in the east to power outages affecting thousands of residents in the west, to record April snowfall depleting snow removal budgets and hitting ranchers hard during calving season, this April has been an extremely challenging month for all North Dakotans. We appreciate the federal government considering these requests for assistance to help communities recover from these storms and build resiliency against future severe weather events. We’re especially grateful for the whole-of-government response by our state agencies as well as the incredible efforts by local emergency managers, first responders, road crews, health care workers and others to protect the lives and property of all North Dakota citizens.” See <https://www.governor.nd.gov/news/burgum-declares-statewide-emergency-flooding-infrastructure-damage-caused-weekend-storms>.

#### **Utah/Drought**

On April 21, Governor Spencer Cox (R-UT) declared a state of emergency due to drought. He said: “We’ve had a very volatile water year, and unfortunately, recent spring storms are not enough to make up the shortage in our snowpack. Once again, I call on all Utahns – households, farmers, businesses, governments and other groups – to carefully consider their needs and reduce their water use. We saved billions of gallons last year and we can do it again.”

The press release noted that Utah has been in drought eight of the past ten years, and that this year’s snowpack is 25% below normal. The Utah Department of Natural Resources reported that: (1) 99.39% of the state is in severe drought or worse, with 43.46% of Utah in extreme drought; (2) statewide snow water equivalent (SWE), or how much water would be in the snowpack if it melted, peaked at 12 inches (75% of the typical median peak of 16 inches for our water year); (3) nineteen of Utah’s largest 45 reservoirs are below 55% of available capacity, with overall statewide storage at 59% of capacity (compared to 67% capacity at this time in 2021); (4) soil moisture – critical for effective spring runoff – is 4% higher compared to normal for this time of year; (5) of the 94 measured streams, 59 are flowing below normal despite spring runoff, and two streams are flowing at record low conditions. See: [https://governor.utah.gov/2022/04/21/drought-emergency-order/#:~:text=SALT%20LAKE%20CITY%20\(April%2021,triggers%20increased%20monitoring%20and%20reporting](https://governor.utah.gov/2022/04/21/drought-emergency-order/#:~:text=SALT%20LAKE%20CITY%20(April%2021,triggers%20increased%20monitoring%20and%20reporting).

### **ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Department of the Interior/Colorado River**

On April 8, Tanya Trujillo, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of the Interior, sent a letter to representatives of the Governors of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming outlining the most recent impacts of drought and low runoff in the Colorado River Basin, as well as the finalization of the 2022 Drought Response Operations Plan in the coming month. She expressed additional concerns about hydropower operations. The letter said: “Notwithstanding these robust, ongoing efforts...we believe that additional actions are needed to reduce the risk of Lake Powell dropping to elevations at which Glen Canyon Dam releases could only be accomplished through the river outlet works (i.e., below elevation 3490’ mean sea level (msl)), or hydropower operations infrastructure at Glen Canyon Dam would be adversely impacted.... In such circumstances, Glen Canyon Dam facilities face unprecedented operational reliability challenges, water users in the Basin face increased uncertainty, downstream resources could be impacted, the western electrical grid would experience uncertain risk and instability, and water and power supplies to the

West and Southwestern United States would be subject to increased operational uncertainty.”

The letter continued: “Glen Canyon Dam was not envisioned to operate solely through the outlet works for an extended period of time and operating at this low lake level increases risks to water delivery and potential adverse impacts to downstream resources and infrastructure. In addition, should Lake Powell decline further below elevation 3490 feet, we have recently confirmed that essential drinking water infrastructure supplying the City of Page, Arizona and the LeChee Chapter of the Navajo Nation could not function. Given our lack of actual operating experience in such circumstances since Lake Powell filled, these issues raise profound concerns regarding prudent dam operations, facility reliability, public health and safety, and the ability to conduct emergency operations.” The letter requested that the States consider further conservation efforts and potentially reducing Lake Powell releases by 500,000 acre-feet, to 7.0 million acre-feet for the 2022 water year, under the terms of the 2007 Interim Guidelines.

### **EPA/Drinking Water SRFs**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released a report, AWIA Best Practices for Administration of Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) highlighting practices in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, North Dakota and Utah, as well as Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. The report was prepared pursuant to requirements under Section 2015(g) of the America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA). It highlights case studies in seven key areas: (1) streamlining the DWSRF application process; (2) programs that help borrowers complete assistance applications; (3) incentives for larger public water systems to help smaller public water systems with applications; (4) practices to ensure that loan funds are used to provide loans, loan guarantees, or other authorized assistance in a timely fashion; (5) practices that support effective management of loan funds; (6) practices and tools to enhance financial management of loan funds; and (7) key financial measures for evaluating DWSRF operations. See [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/awia-best-practices-for-administration-of-drinking-water-state-revolving-funds\\_2.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/awia-best-practices-for-administration-of-drinking-water-state-revolving-funds_2.pdf).

### **NIFC/Wildfires**

On April 24, the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) announced eleven new large fires had been reported over the weekend in Colorado, Florida, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Texas. Other large fires continue to burn in Alaska, Arizona, and Louisiana. Fuels and fire behavior advisories were issued in parts of Kansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma,

and Texas. The report noted: “To date, 20,262 wildfires have burned 865,290 acres. This continues to be well above the 10-year average [for this time of year] of 14,522 wildfires [that] burned 669,042 acres.” Fires degrade water supplies and water quality.

### **USDA/Infrastructure**

On April 21, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsak and White House Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu announced a second round of funding providing \$420M for 132 infrastructure projects in 31 states, including rehabilitating dams, and flood prevention and watershed restoration projects. Watershed and flood prevention operations (WFPO) funds provide technical and financial assistance for new watershed infrastructure in western states including projects in Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah. Watershed rehabilitation program (REHAB) funds to upgrade dams constructed with the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in western states include projects in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Vilsak noted that the programs help communities rebuild after natural disasters and prepare for future events. See: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/04/21/president-biden-usda-announce-420-million-investment-watershed>.

On April 20, Vilsak and White House Domestic Policy Advisor Susan Rice announced the formation of the USDA-led Rural Partners Network to assist rural communities to navigate federal funding opportunities Vilsack said: “Rural America is incredibly diverse – economically, racially, culturally and geographically. What makes sense for one community may not for another. The Rural Partners Network will help communities get funding for investments that create long-lasting benefits for their communities, especially those that have been overlooked in the past. By providing one-on-one support to these communities, we can lay the foundation for people to build healthy, successful futures on their own terms.”

Rice said: “President Biden has delivered unprecedented resources for rural communities through the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. However, just making resources available is not enough – the federal government must work better for rural communities so that they can fully take advantage of these opportunities. The Rural Partners Network will empower rural communities to get their fair share of federal funds, an important goal for not only economic development but equity as well.” See: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/04/20/biden-harris-administration-launches-nationwide-network-partners>.

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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.**