



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **CONGRESS**

#### **FY23 Appropriations/DOI and EPA**

On June 29, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 8262) by a vote of 32-24. The bill approved \$44.8B in appropriations, an 18% (\$6.8B) increase over the FY22 enacted level.

For the Department of the Interior, H.R. 8262 would appropriate \$16.6B in discretionary funds, including \$1.5B for the Bureau of Land Management, \$1.9B for the Fish and Wildlife Service, \$3.6B for the National Park Service, \$1.6B for the U.S. Geological Survey, \$291M for the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and \$4.4B for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The bill also provides \$6.43B for wildland fire management.

For the Environmental Protection Agency, the bill would provide \$11.5B, with \$5.18B toward State and Tribal Assistance Grants, including \$1.75B for Clean Water and \$1.1B Drinking Water State Revolving Funds; and \$72M for WIFIA loans.

#### **FY23 Appropriations/NOAA and NASA**

On June 28, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 8256) by a vote of 31-24. The bill approved \$85.5B in appropriations, a 9.7% (\$7.6B) increase over the FY22 enacted level. For the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the bill included \$6.8B. For the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the bill included \$25.5B.

#### **FY23 Appropriations/Corps and Reclamation**

On June 28, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 8255) by a vote of 32-24. The bill approved \$56.2B in appropriations, an increase of \$3.4B above the FY22 enacted level. For the Army Corps of Engineers, H.R.

8255 provided \$8.9B, including \$160M for investigations, \$2.5B for construction, and \$5.2B for operation and maintenance. For the Bureau of Reclamation, the bill provided \$1.9B, including \$189.3M for WaterSMART programs to assist western states with historic drought, \$54M for rural water projects, and \$451M for water resources projects, including projects authorized by the WIIN Act.

#### **FY23 Appropriations/Agriculture**

On June 23, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 8239) by a vote of 31-26. The bill approved \$27.2B in appropriations, an 8% (\$2B) increase above the enacted FY22 level. This includes \$1.5B for rural water and waste program loans and \$680M in water and waste grants; \$1B for NRCS operations; and \$115M for watershed and flood prevention operations. <https://appropriations.house.gov>

### **CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Drought**

On June 14, the WSWC submitted written testimony to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on Examining Short and Long-Term Solutions to Extreme Drought in the Western U.S. The testimony read in part, "We can't do much in the short-term to enhance our physical water supply situation significantly. We have turned to address water demand to find solutions."

The testimony highlighted some of the tools and programs that are increasingly important to address the short and long-term impacts of drought while seeking innovative solutions to water supply and demand management challenges in the West. <https://westernstateswater.org/testimony/>

#### **Federal Columbia River Power System Certainty Act**

On June 9, Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) along with ten co-sponsors, introduced the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Certainty Act which aims to

maintain the hydropower assets. The bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to operate the FCRPS in a manner consistent and set forth in the supplemental opinion of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was published in 2020 by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). It developed new operational requirements for the dams with additional considerations for mitigation and conservation actions to protect endangered salmon. Rep Newhouse said: "The science is crystal clear: breaching the Four Lower Snake River Dams would be harmful to our communities, our environment, and our economy.... In the Pacific Northwest, not only do we depend on this critical infrastructure for clean, renewable, and affordable energy, but transportation for 60% of the nation's wheat. The Snake River Dams are integral to flood control, navigation, irrigation, agriculture, and recreation in Central Washington, and our region cannot afford to lose them...."

On June 9, 2022, Governor Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) released a draft report about a potential plan to breach the dams, providing a one-month public comment period that ends on July 11. In her press release, Senator Murray said: "We continue to approach the question of breaching with open minds and without a predetermined decision. From the start, we have placed public and stakeholder engagement from communities across the Pacific Northwest as the foundation of any regional process."

In October 2021, the Biden Administration filed an agreement in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon, outlining how the Columbia River Basin's eight dams will be operated over the coming year. This agreement included measures such as additional fish passage spills while preserving reliable hydropower production, transportation, and other services the dams provide. The agreement also asks the court to stay the litigation until the end of July 2022, to afford affected states, Tribal Nations, and stakeholders the opportunity to identify and review alternative and durable solutions to longstanding challenges in the Columbia River System.

For more information about the ongoing debate to manage the Columbia River System for hydropower generation and the protection of salmon populations, see WSW #2389, #2392, and #2439.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

### **Nebraska**

In July, the City of Lincoln began a study of alternative water sources to ensure adequate water supply to meet future demand. Current projections indicate a safe and reliable water supply for the next 20

to 25 years, but as the city continues to grow in population and to weather drought conditions, the city is planning now to secure a second source of water. Two projects are currently under consideration: (1) a pipeline from the Missouri River; and (2) a partnership with the Omaha Metropolitan Utilities District to use water from its existing pipelines. The review of options is expected to be completed by the end of the year. See [www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/LTU/Utilities/LWS/Second-Water-Source](http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/LTU/Utilities/LWS/Second-Water-Source)

### **Montana**

On June 13, the Yellowstone River in southern Montana experienced historic flooding following four days of a warm atmospheric river event that dumped 2-3 inches of rain and melted late spring snows. Discharge peaked at approximately 50,000 cfs and the Corwin Springs gage recorded nearly 14 feet of water, exceeding all records going back to 1892. Floodwaters damaged roads, power, and access to clean drinking water.

## **MEETINGS**

### **Dividing the Waters/Upper Rio Grande Basin**

On July 14 at 10am PDT, the National Judicial College's Dividing the Waters Program will host a webinar, Surface Water-Groundwater Conflicts: A Case Study of Conjunctive Administration of Water in the Upper Rio Grande Basin. In this second session in a series of four webinars, the focus will be the design, development, and implementation of the Colorado Rio Grande Decision Support System (RGDSS) and its groundwater model. To register, see [https://www.judges.org/dividing\\_the\\_waters/webinars/](https://www.judges.org/dividing_the_waters/webinars/)

### **Idaho/HABs**

On July 13, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will host an interagency open house event for the public to answer questions on cyanobacteria and cyanotoxins, including health effects, water quality sampling and monitoring, public safety, and related topics. Various Idaho agencies will attend the open house, as well as the USGS and Bureau of Reclamation.

### **WestFAST/DOI/Wildfire**

On July 13, the Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) will host a webinar on the U.S. Department of Interior's (DOI) Office of Wildland Fire. The Office of Wildland Fire makes sure that nearly one billion dollars is strategically invested to reduce wildfire risk, rehabilitate burned landscapes, promote a better understanding of wildfire, and support firefighters by providing the tools. To register see: <https://westernstateswater.org/events/department-of-interiors-office-of-wildland-fire/>.

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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.**