



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **CONGRESS/ENERGY/WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Pumped Storage**

On September 29, 2022, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing titled Innovative Opportunities for Energy Storage. The hearing included discussion about the importance of pumped storage as a component of the renewable energy transition. Tim Hemstreet, PacifiCorp, provided testimony summarizing the electric utilities interest and plans to add an additional 12,000 MW of new renewable generation over the next 20 years. This will require an additional 5,500 MW of energy storage much of which could be met through new pumped storage. In 2021, PacifiCorp filed Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) applications for 11 new pumped storage projects in five western states (ID, OR, UT, WA, and WY). Hemstreet told the committee that although pumped storage provides 93% of current energy storage in the U.S., there has not been a new large-scale project brought online in the country since the early 1990s.

Hemstreet asked the committee to support these efforts by directing the U.S. Department of Energy to “continue its efforts in evaluating how pumped storage can benefit the grid and maintain reliability to raise awareness about the value of pumped storage.” He also indicated a need to improve the FERC licensing process, in addition to other permitting processes, for pumped storage to accelerate the pace of project development. He told the committee that “the complex and lengthy licensing process, and the diffuse responsibility for licensing decisions...adds uncertainty to the development of pumped storage projects.” He went on to talk about reforms to the Federal Power Act that are broadly supported by multiple stakeholders. Senators asked several questions about barriers to implementation of pumped storage in addition to other energy storage solutions. See <https://www.energy.senate.gov/>.

### **WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Arizona/Infrastructure Financing**

On October 3, Governor Doug Ducey (R-AZ) announced four appointments to a new Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) Board

established this year to provide loans and grants to water providers and entities to assist with conservation, efficiency and reuse, new technologies, and importing water into Arizona. Governor Ducey said: “We passed the most significant water legislation in 40 years this year in partnership with our legislative leaders. Now, with the right team, we’re positioned with \$1.4 billion to secure our state’s water future for the next 100 years. The board members of the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority will be important stewards of our water resources, pursuing innovative augmentation and conservation projects. I’m confident that with fresh ideas and diverse backgrounds, representing every corner of our state, we will ensure Arizona remains a land of opportunity for families and businesses. Our appointees have the right skills and experience to position our state for future success.” <https://azgovernor.gov/>

#### **California/Groundwater**

On October 3, the California Department of Water Resources (CDWR) published its semi-annual update on groundwater conditions in the State. The report notes that “Californians continue to rely on groundwater to compensate for dwindling snowpack and surface water supplies during the current drought.” Land subsidence from groundwater withdrawals increased in 2022, and groundwater levels in 32% of wells declined over five feet between Spring 2021 and Spring 2022. CDWR received a total of 1,021 dry well reports. CDWR also awarded \$480M in drought relief assistance to small and urban communities to address water supply challenges. See <https://data.cnra.ca.gov/>

#### **Kansas/Drought**

On October 6, Governor Laura Kelly (D-KS) approved updated drought declarations, placing all 105 Kansas counties in a watch (27), warning (11), or emergency (67) status.

Governor Kelly said: “Much of Kansas continues to experience severe drought conditions which have impacted the daily lives of Kansans through our hot and dry summer months. As these conditions are forecast to persist or worsen over the foreseeable future, I strongly

encourage all Kansans to be mindful of ways we can conserve water and minimize fire hazards.”

Connie Owen, Director of the Kansas Water Office and Chair of the Governor’s Drought Response Team, said: “The current drought conditions impacting much of Kansas have stressed surface and groundwater supplies, negatively impacted crop production, and led to elevated wildfire risk in many areas. The Governor’s Drought Response Team will continue to be diligent in the monitoring of drought conditions across Kansas and make future drought recommendations to Governor Kelly as conditions change. With outlooks continuing to call for challenging conditions into the winter months, the need for continued drought awareness and action across Kansas is essential.”

The press release said: “Much of Kansas has experienced above normal temperatures dating back to the previous April, with precipitation averaging well below normal for many of those same locations over that same timeframe. In some parts of Kansas these precipitation deficit conditions have existed since the latter part of 2021. The outlooks from now through December favor above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation for nearly all portions of Kansas, meaning drought conditions could persist and expand over the next several months.” See <https://kwo.ks.gov/>

#### **Kansas/EPA/Infrastructure**

On October 5, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presented \$80M in water infrastructure funds from the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) for their State Revolving Fund (SRF). Leo Henning, KDHE Deputy Secretary for Environment, said: “Kansas has taken its responsibility in implementing the Clean Water Act seriously since its inception in 1972. We have made significant investments in our wastewater infrastructure, which grants such as this one today from EPA have made possible. As a rural state, we have had to be innovative in incentivizing management practices to reduce pollutants coming off of ag lands during runoff. While emerging issues always loom on the horizon of clean water, KDHE is positioned with strong staff, programs, and authorities to meet those challenges now and in the future. We are thankful for our partnership with Region 7, working together to improve and protect the water of Kansas in the manner intended by this Act 50 years ago.” See <https://www.epa.gov/>

#### **New Mexico/EPA/Infrastructure**

On September 30, EPA announced \$26M in water infrastructure funds from IIJA to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA). Governor Michelle Lujan

Grisham (D-NM) said: “We worked diligently to ensure that New Mexico quickly received our share of infrastructure funding so that we can begin to put it to use as soon as possible. The people of New Mexico will have more access to quality drinking water and healthy watersheds thanks to our successful efforts to leverage these unprecedented federal investments. I thank the members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation for their work to deliver this important funding for our state.”

The NMED received \$8.7M through the Clean Water SRF, with half the grant focused on assisting disadvantaged communities. NMFA received \$17.9M through the Drinking Water SRF, with a focus on improving water treatment, fixing aging water distribution systems, improving sources of water supply, and replacing or repairing water storage tanks. See <https://www.epa.gov/>

#### **Oklahoma/Drought**

On October 3, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission unanimously approved a program to make emergency drought cost-share funds available to all 77 Oklahoma counties through the local conservation districts. The \$3M appropriated by the Oklahoma Legislature can be applied to projects such as drilling water wells, watering and pumping facilities, pipelines, pasture taps, cover crop planting, forage and biomass planting, pond cleanout, and heavy use area protection. The press release noted that 99.88% of the State is in Moderate to Exceptional Drought, with 94% in Severe to Exceptional Drought. See <https://conservation.ok.gov>

#### **Washington/Streamflow Restoration**

On October 5, the Washington Department of Ecology announced the 26 projects selected for \$35M in competitive grants to help increase water storage capacity, improve fish habitat, acquire water rights, and improve water management and infrastructure. The Washington Legislature passed the 15-year Streamflow Restoration Program in 2018, which seeks to protect rivers and streams while providing water for rural homes. This is the third round of grants since the first projects were approved in 2019. See <https://ecology.wa.gov>

#### **PEOPLE**

On October 14, **Kenneth Titus**, Chief Counsel, Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), and a WSWC member will work his final day with KDA. Earlier this year he filed to run for a state representative seat and has been unopposed, so he will take office in January. Kenneth was appointed to the WSWC in July 2017 and has served on the Legal Committee. We congratulate Kenneth on his new position and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

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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.**