



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

682 East Vine Street / Suite 7 / Murray, UT 84107 / (801) 685-2555 / Fax 685-2559 / [www.westernstateswater.org](http://www.westernstateswater.org)

Chair - Jennifer Verleger; Executive Director - Tony Willardson; Editor - Michelle Bushman; Subscriptions - Julie Groat

### **CONGRESS**

#### **Continuing Resolution/PRECIP Act**

On December 16, the President signed the Further Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act into law (P.L. 117-299). The continuing resolution extended the deadline to complete FY2023 appropriations to December 23. Notably, the bill also included the Providing Research and Estimates of Changes In Precipitation (PRECIP) Act (H.R. 1437) as it became the vehicle for the continuing resolution.

The PRECIP Act amended the 2017 Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act (15 U.S.C. 8501 et seq.) to add a provision on improving federal precipitation frequency information. The bill directed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator to study and improve the outdated probable maximum precipitation (PMP) estimation practices, and authorized \$1.5M for the study. It also directed NOAA to update the PMP estimates every ten years, and to make the studies publicly available.

House Science, Space, and Technology Chair Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), who co-sponsored the bill, talked about the lasting impact extreme precipitation events can have on communities. She said: "As climate change continues to bring on more extreme weather, we must equip ourselves with the best data to tackle this growing issue. I am pleased the House passed the PRECIP Act to address gaps in accurate precipitation estimates and improve best practices needed for precipitation estimation studies. This bill reflects our continued bipartisan and bicameral commitment to better understanding and addressing extreme precipitation events."

Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Roger Wicker (R-MS), who co-sponsored a related bill on the Senate side, also applauded the passage of the bill. Booker said: "I am proud that this bipartisan legislation has been signed into law and will provide NOAA with vital funding to consult with partner organizations and conduct studies to modernize and improve our nation's precipitation data. This will be essential as we continue to face the realities

of climate change and extreme weather across the country." Wicker noted that Mississippi has hundreds of state-regulated dams with high hazard potential that are threatened by flooding events. "Forty-two of these dams have failed and nine others have been drained. With this important legislation signed into law, dam control managers can get the data they need to improve dam safety and protect Americans."

The WSWC (Position #459) supports NOAA leading federal efforts toward developing 21st century national PMP standards for estimating extreme rainfall in order to provide consistent requirements for ensuring public safety. See WSW #2477, Special Report #2477.

### **WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Colorado River/CRWUA**

The Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) held its annual meeting in Las Vegas on December 14-16, and commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 1922 Colorado River Compact. An introductory video, noted the Colorado River sustains over 40 million people, more than 5 million acres of farmland, and more than 1.4 trillion in economic activity.

The film highlighted a number of milestones demonstrating the importance of working together to protect the river and its many benefits, including the 2007 guidelines for sharing surplus and shortages, a 2017 agreement with Mexico to store water in Lake Mead and share shortages, the 2019 Drought Contingency Plans (DCPs) and reductions, contributions and conservation, as well as 2021 Lower Basin steps to protect reservoir levels. Still, in 2022, water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead dropped to record lows.

"CRWUA is committed to driving an inclusive diverse conversation in the years to come so all perspectives are heard." It is a forum for sharing "ideas and approaches to address dwindling Colorado River supplies." Looking forward, "How will history remember us?" As in the past, we search for solutions through collaboration. "What happens next will shape the future of the West." There will be hard conversations, and "...even more difficult

sacrifices are ahead as we collectively face the reality of a hotter, drier climate.” “Finding common ground is as essential now as it was then [in 1922].”

Brenda Burman, Executive Strategy Advisor, Central Arizona Project, and former U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) Commissioner presented: “Colorado River 101: A First Century (of the Compact) Retrospective.” See <http://www.crwua.org/annual-conference-2022.html>.

Addressing CRWUA, Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) emphasized the urgent need for the Seven Colorado River Basin States to find consensus on a water-sharing agreement that protects the River system. He also highlighted the critical role that tribal communities play in helping Basin States and the federal government protect the River system. “We know that inaction is not the answer. And insufficient action will mean serious consequences for the entire Basin. Because if a solution is not developed by the Basin, Commissioner Touton will figure it out for us. And as much as I enjoy working with the Commissioner, I think it’s better for everyone if the federal government doesn’t make these tough decisions. That sentiment is shared by many of my Senate colleagues. No matter what Basin state we represent, we all want water users to take the lead.”

Special guests included Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Tommy Beaudreau; Tanya Trujillo, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science; Camille C. Touton, Commissioner, USBR; and Maria-Elena Giner, U.S. Commissioner, International Boundary and Water Commission; with a Mexico delegation participating remotely.

“Despite the dire conditions we face, we at the department know that we can and must develop new solutions for mitigating decreasing water supplies,” said Beaudreau. “The coming three months are absolutely critical.... I’m encouraged by the conversations among the basin states.” “It will take contributions from all of us. From all the states, all of the sectors, we have a shared responsibility to continue to take actions to protect the system for our future generations,” exclaimed Trujillo. “Numerous agreements in this basin took years to complete,” Touton acknowledged while addressing her call to conserve as much as 4M acre-feet of water. Nevertheless, “We hope a consensus alternative emerges from the basin before the end of January.”

A panel entitled, “The Next 100 Years Begins Now” was moderated by Jeff Kightlinger, General Manager (retired) Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which included representatives of the Seven Basin State, including: (1) Tom Buschatzke, Director, Arizona Department of Water Resources; (2) John J.

Entsminger, General Manager, Southern Nevada Water Authority; (3) Brandon Gebhart, State Engineer, Wyoming; (4) Estevan López, UCRC Commissioner for New Mexico; (5) Becky Mitchell, Director, Colorado Water Conservation Board; (6) Peter Nelson, Chairman, Colorado River Board of California; and (7) Gene Shawcroft, General Manager, Central Utah Water Conservancy District.

“The State of the River: On the Cusp of a New Century” was a panel moderated by Aaron Chavez, Executive Director, San Juan Water Commission, and CRWUA President, which included: (1) Ted Cooke, General Manager, Central Arizona Project; (2) Chuck Cullom, UCRC Executive Director; (3) David Palumbo, USBR Deputy Commissioner of Operations; and (4) James Prairie, Research and Modeling Group Chief, Upper Colorado Basin Region, USBR.

WSWC Member and Past Chair, Jeanine Jones, California Department of Water Resources, moderated a Colloquium on Adapting to the New Normal: Trying Technology and Tools. Speakers included: (1) Don Barnett, Executive Director, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum; (2) Sara Larsen, Deputy Director and Chief Engineer, Upper Colorado River Commission; (3) Tom Painter, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Airborne Snow Observatories, Inc.; (4) Sara Tucker, Partner, Natural Resource Results; and (5) Josh Weimer, External Affairs Manager, Turlock Irrigation District.

### **Western Regional Partnership**

On December 8-9, the Western Regional Partnership (WRP) held its Principle’s Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona with leaders from state, tribal, and federal agencies. Several panels provided highlights from the 2022 report on *Building Resilience in the West for America’s Defense, Energy, Environment, and Infrastructure through Enhanced Collaboration among Federal, State, and Tribal Entities*. The report was the result of more than two years of deep-dive conversations and collaboration on water security, resilient energy infrastructure, resiliency of airspace, and disaster mitigation.

The speakers on the water security panel included Stephen Bartell, Department of Justice; Gloria Montano Greene, Department of Agriculture; Roger Gorke, Environmental Protection Agency; and Michelle Bushman, WSWC. Tanya Trujillo, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, and Michael Brain, Deputy Commissioner, USBR, also added their comments regarding water security and answered questions.

---

**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.**