



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION **FY24 Budget**

On March 9, President Biden released his \$6.9T budget request, including \$1.7T in discretionary spending. The budget includes increases for the Departments of Agriculture (\$30.1B, a \$3.7B increase above the FY23 enacted amount), Commerce (\$12.3B, a \$1.1B increase), and Interior (\$18.8B, a \$1.6B increase), and for the Environmental Protection Agency (\$12.1B, a \$2B increase), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (\$27.2B, a \$1.8B increase), and the request is \$7.4B for the Corps of Engineers (a \$1.3B decrease below the FY23 enacted amount). The budget notes various supplemental funding already available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) budget includes funding for the Grassroots Source Water Protection Program (\$7M); the Watershed Rehabilitation Program (\$10M); Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (\$47M); Water Bank Program (\$4M); Wetlands Mitigation Banking (\$5M); Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (\$1.9B); Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) (\$424M); Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) (\$283M); Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) (\$943M); soil surveys (\$89M); snow surveys (\$12M); and technical assistance for Farm Bill programs (\$1.6B).

The Department of Commerce budget includes \$6.8B for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a \$451M increase. This includes \$2.1B for the weather and climate satellites, with \$280M for Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites R Series (GOES-R), \$342M for Polar Weather Satellites (PWS), and \$97M for the Space Weather Follow On (SWFO). Commerce's budget overview said: "The Budget continues strategic investments in the next generation of climate, weather, and space weather satellites by providing \$417M for Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO), \$124M for LEO Weather Satellites, and \$225M for Space Weather Next. This satellite budget is based on a new ten-year \$25B cost profile for NOAA weather satellites. This cost profile

follows through on the Administration's commitment to provide the observing systems necessary to meet evolving weather, climate, and environmental data needs while responsibly managing costs. The Budget... [and] the National Weather Service (NWS) at \$1.3B....NOAA's Budget also includes \$231M for NOAA's climate research programs to support the ongoing work of the National Climate Assessment and continue high-priority long-term observing, monitoring, researching, and modeling activities."

The Department of the Interior (DOI) budget funds the Bureau of Reclamation (\$1.5B); the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) (\$1.8B); the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (\$1.7B); Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) (\$2.1B); National Park Service (NPS) (\$3.8B); and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (\$3B).

Reclamation's request is \$62.9M for WaterSMART programs, including Drought Response Program (\$24M); WaterSMART grants (\$13.7M); the Basin Studies program (\$15M); the Title XVI program (\$4M); the Water Conservation Field Services program (\$3.4M); the Cooperative Watershed Management program (\$2.3M); and the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program (\$500,000). "The budget includes additional investments to support drought-affected areas of the West. For example, \$16.8M is requested for the Lower Colorado River Operations Program to implement drought contingency plans and response actions to conserve storage at Lake Mead. Another \$1M is requested for water infrastructure investments along the Texas border, and \$2M of the request for the Central Valley Project in California is specific to drought planning and resiliency efforts that will be implemented in coordination with the California Department of Water Resources. In addition, the 2024 budget requests an increase of \$15M dedicated to supporting Tribal drought assistance actions throughout the West." Under the \$1.3B for the Water and Related Resources account, funding is including for the construction, planning, and management of water and energy projects (\$606.2M); operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of water and power facilities (\$694.9); extraordinary maintenance activities (\$105.3M); and the dam safety program (\$210.2M).

The request for the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund (2009 Omnibus, P.L. 111-11) remains static at \$124M, but the Administration requests funding and proposes legislation for the newly-created Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund (IIJA, P.L. 117-58) “to cover the costs of enacted and future water rights settlements and to address the ongoing Operation, Maintenance, and Repair requirements associated with four enacted Indian Water Rights Settlements managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. The proposal would provide a total of \$2.8B; \$250M annually over ten years for enacted and future water rights settlements, and \$34M annually over ten years for requirements associated with the Ak Chin Indian Water Rights Settlement Project, the Animas-La Plata Project (Colorado Ute Settlement), the Columbia and Snake River Salmon Recovery Project (Nez Perce Settlement), and the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. Funds for these four settlements would be deposited into the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund and shall transfer to the Bureau of Reclamation for implementation.”

The USGS budget request of \$313.4M for the water resources programs includes the Water Availability and Use Science Program (\$74.7M) “with increases for integrated science to understand drought and wildfire impacts on water availability, deliver national and regional water availability assessments, and develop water use withdrawal models”; the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program (\$120.3M), which includes “increases to continue buildout of the Next Generation Water Observing System and expand the Federal Priority Streamgage Network”; the National Water Quality Program (\$103.3M); and the Water Resources Research Act Program (\$15M). The National Land Imaging program is funded at \$143.7M with increases “for the development of operational capability to support Landsat Next, which is planned to launch by late 2030, and a pilot project that will augment Landsat data with commercially available satellite data.”

For BLM’s Aquatic Resources, the budget proposes \$73.4M, which “includes a program increase of \$9.1M to restore degraded aquatic resources and increase their resiliency to drought, including by restoring landscape connectivity by removing fish barriers, eradicating invasive species, and working with partners to improve water quality and quantity.” The \$97.8M for Resource Management Planning includes an increase of \$6.2M for monitoring and data analysis of water resources. The \$62.8M for the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) and Hazardous Materials management Program includes an increase of \$4.4M to accelerate inventorying and remediating hardrock AML sites on BLM lands.

For further information, see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/appendix/>.

CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES

USGS/Streamgages

On February 28, a coalition of 96 water management and use stakeholders – led by the Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) and joined by the WSWC – submitted letters to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, in support of the USGS streamgage network. “A fully funded streamgage network – one that keeps pace with inflationary and routine maintenance overhead – is critical to ensuring the nation’s socioeconomic...well-being. These streamgages are crucial as we embark on new efforts to understand, plan for, and build our collective capacity to improve the nation’s resilience to extreme weather events.... Without water data from this widespread system of sites, we are less equipped to make informed decision making, such as flood and hurricane risk predictions, drought determinations, and water supply forecasts.”

The USGS recently completed an analysis of the streamflow monitoring network and identified gaps in the important areas related to building resilience for extreme weather events: (1) 83% of coastal watersheds lack streamgages; (2) 39 states lack streamflow information, and more gages are needed in 30% of NOAA’s Climate Divisions; and (3) additional gages may be needed in areas where water supply is vulnerable to reduced snowpack due to climate warming.

The letter requests \$32M in FY24 funding for the Federal Priorities Streamgages (FPS), \$68M for the Cooperative Matching Funds (CMF) Program, and \$35M for the Next Generation Water Observing System (NGWOS) and data modernization. The letter notes that funding for FPS has been flat since 2016 despite inflationary costs that have generated a \$1M per year shortfall since 2022.

The CMF program supports 5,275 nationwide streamgages. “The USGS works with more than 1,400 partners nationwide (federal, state, tribal, local and non-governmental organizations) using CMF to jointly support streamgages. This matching program began as a 50/50 cost share but has seen the federal contribution decrease to less than 30 percent. When an increasing share of the streamgages must be funded by reimbursable and private parties, they become ever more susceptible to having the funding pulled, thus rendering the FPS program less stable overall.”

The coalition expressed appreciation for FY23 support for NGWOS, but noted that the small (\$500,000) increase was only sufficient to begin planning for a fifth basin study, without the resources needed to move forward. <https://icwp.org/streamgage-support/2023-senate-streamgage-letter-fy24/>