



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

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

WESTERN GOVERNORS/WATER RESOURCES **Oregon/Drought/Water Supply Outlook**

On May 25, Governor Tina Kotek (D-OR) declared a drought emergency in two counties in central Oregon, finding that low streamflow at 88% of the long-term average, low precipitation, and low soil moisture have caused, or will cause natural and economic disasters. Her Executive Order 23-13 said: "Forecasted water supply conditions and precipitation levels are not expected to improve. Drought is likely to have a significant economic impact on the farm, ranch, vineyard, recreation, tourism, and natural resources sectors, as well as an impact on drinking water, fish and wildlife, and important minimum flows for public instream uses and other natural resources dependent on adequate precipitation, stored water, and streamflow in these areas. Extreme conditions are expected to affect local growers and livestock, increase the potential for fire, shorten the growing season, and decrease water supplies." The order directed the Oregon Water Resources Department to coordinate with other agencies to provide assistance to water users and assess water needs for fish and wildlife. www.oregon.gov/newsroom/

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES **NASA/Weather Forecasting**

On May 25, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched the second and final pair of small cube satellites in the TROPICS constellation, which is designed to observe tropical cyclones in a unique, inclined low-Earth orbit that enables hourly observations. Current weather tracking satellites have a timing of about once every six hours. The acronym stands for "Time-Resolved Observations of Precipitation structure and storm Intensity with a Constellation of Smallsats" and is located at the latitude of the Tropics.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said: "With missions like TROPICS, NASA continues to lead the way in getting satellite data more quickly to our partners like the National Hurricane Center and Joint Typhoon Warning Center, providing vital forecasts that help our communities before, during, and after landfall."

Karen St. Germain, Director, NASA's Earth Science Division, said: "As we move into hurricane season..., TROPICS will be in position to provide unprecedented detail on these storms, helping us better understand how they form, intensify, and move across the ocean." <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-rocket-lab-complete-launch-of-tropics-cubesat-constellation>

USDA/Watershed Infrastructure

On May 22, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced an infrastructure investment of \$265M through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for 28 projects in 16 states that included streambank stabilization, flood prevention, and post-fire watershed restoration. The projects are part of the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, and western state locations include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/05/22/biden-harris-administration-invests-watershed-infrastructure-help>

Infrastructure/Tribes

On May 22, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced \$48M to repair tribal water sanitation systems, upgrade irrigation and power projects, and invest in dam safety. The water sanitation funds (\$8.3M) will be used to address Environmental Protection Agency violation notices, contamination issues, and critical risks of system failure, and will support two projects in Arizona and Washington. The irrigation and power funds (\$10M) will address aging infrastructure issues, including deferred maintenance and safety, for seven projects in Arizona, Idaho, Montana, and Washington. Another \$30M will address known dam safety issues at four locations in Arizona, Montana, and South Dakota. <https://www.doi.gov/press-releases/biden-harris-administration-announces-48-million-water-sanitation-irrigation-power-and>

BLM/Landscape Restoration

On May 31, DOI and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced \$161M toward

ecosystem restoration and resilience on public lands in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. BLM selected 21 Restoration Landscapes based on ecological need and community value, with local, tribal, state, and federal collaborative opportunities. Projects include repairing watersheds, restoring habitat, and re-creating wetland meadows. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6966af5d6f584f8b80f102d391671a3f>

CONGRESS

Columbia River Treaty

On May 16-17, the United States and Canada held the 17th round of negotiations on the Columbia River Treaty. The two delegations discussed management of flood risks after the Treaty regime changes in September 2024, planning for hydropower and flexibility in dam operations, mechanisms for incorporating Tribal and Indigenous input into Treaty operations, and opportunities to strengthen ecosystem provisions. The U.S. delegation included representatives from the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division, the DOI, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as expert-advisors from the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. <https://www.state.gov/virtual-listening-session-following-the-17th-round-of-negotiations-to-modernize-the-columbia-river-treaty-regime/>

CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES

Rural Water Systems

On May 31, the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife held a hearing on Water Affordability and Small System Assistance. Witnesses included: Kyle Jones, Community Water Center; Rosemary Menard, City of Santa Cruz, California; and Mark Pepper, Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems.

Jones noted that small water systems are failing due to contamination, inadequate supplies, or unaffordable water rights. He expressed appreciation for the historic funding from the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA), but said there is an annual need of \$109B over the next 20 years to meet all of the water infrastructure demands in the United States. Additionally, small water systems with only 1-4 employees tend to lack technical, managerial, or financial capacity to operate their systems safely and effectively. Larger water systems have easier access to state and federal infrastructure funding, while smaller systems may lack the ability to even develop long-term solutions. Further, traditional infrastructure funding programs do not cover operations and maintenance costs.

Menard said that the cost of water for essential residential indoor use increased 250% between 2014 and 2023, from \$30 a month to \$80 a month, and by 2026 will increase another 50% to \$120 a month. "Given the trends for rising costs of water service in Santa Cruz, and for utility customers around the country where costs are or will be increasing to address aging infrastructure, emerging contaminants, and climate change, we must ask how we will maintain equitable access to water service for those customers least able to pay those higher costs." She noted that many publicly owned water systems are prohibited by state statutes from using rate revenues to support assistance programs for low-income customers, and they rely on state and federal funding to address those needs.

Pepper said the biggest challenges facing small water systems right now include affordability, workforce personnel retirement, recruitment, and retention challenges, PFAS regulatory burdens, and the implementation of the IIJA. "SRF set asides help to fill the technical gap by allowing qualified professionals to provide onsite assistance, comply with the myriad of federal...regulations, as well as access to supply chains and troubleshooting advice which is helping to keep affordability indexes within reason. Should SRF set-asides be reduced or eliminated, I would suspect many systems 'affordability index' will turn to 'unaffordable' quickly." While the IIJA funds are greatly appreciated, the work has been slowed by the lack of supplies and engineers to do the work.

ORGANIZATIONS/WATER QUALITY

NGWA/PFAS

On May 26, the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) announced publication of a white paper focused on guidelines for collecting samples of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), titled Practical Guide for PFAS Sampling. The press release said: "Due to the heavy presence of PFAS in our environment, sampling is often a challenge due to issues of cross-contamination and difficulties maintaining quality samples in the field. The white paper provides groundwater professionals guidance in overcoming these obstacles and advice on planning effective PFAS sampling projects. Accurate sampling of PFAS is vital because the data received provide insights into their potential health risks and what strategies should be used for remediation or water treatment. The white paper is currently available for purchase on NGWA's website and is offered free to all NGWA members." <https://www.ngwa.org/publications-and-news/Newsroom/press-releases-2023/national-ground-water-association-publishes-white-paper-on-pfas-sampling>

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.