



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES** **Bureau of Reclamation/WaterSMART**

On August 7, the Department of the Interior (DOI) announced the release of up to \$195M to develop a more resilient water supply, support cooperative watershed management and safeguard aquatic ecosystems, primarily from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's WaterSMART program, as well as from the Inflation Reduction Act and annual appropriations. Last week, Secretary Deb Haaland visited Riverside, California and toured the Eastern Municipal Water District, which provides water for nearly a million residents, with the district receiving \$10M to support the development of a new water recycling plant.

"In the wake of severe drought conditions throughout the West, the Department is putting funding from President Biden's Investing America agenda to work to develop resilient water supplies and provide clean flowing waterways for the aquatic species that depend on them," said Secretary Haaland. "Today's funding opportunities will advance local partnerships and invest in innovative solutions to help build resilient communities."

"These investments from the President's Investing in America agenda will give our partners an opportunity to increase water management flexibility, build climate resilience and provide restored habitat for fish and wildlife," said Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton. "Water supply resilience and flexibility is essential as we work to make Western communities more resilient to the impacts of drought and climate change."

Reclamation is opening three funding opportunities for drought resilience, planning and design and cooperative watershed management and extending an opportunity for aquatic ecosystem projects.

Reclamation is making up to \$55M available in drought resiliency funding to develop projects that can increase water management flexibility, divided into four task areas aimed at infrastructure improvements, groundwater recovery, decision support tools, modeling and measurement and domestic water supply projects

for tribes or disadvantaged communities. Eligibility and the required non-federal cost-share vary by task area.

Up to \$35M is available for planning and design grants to support water management improvements, improve water supplies and create comprehensive drought contingency plans. Eligibility and non-federal cost-share requirements vary.

Reclamation offers up to \$40M for projects under the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program promoting water reliability and cooperation between stakeholders to reduce conflict, facilitate solutions to complex water issues and stretch limited water supplies. This grant will fund establishment of new watershed groups or expansion of existing watershed groups, restoration planning, and project design for local watershed groups to improve watershed health, benefitting multiple water uses.

An additional \$65M is for projects to restore and protect aquatic ecosystems as part of a total of \$95M to support the study, design and construction of ecosystem restoration projects to provide cleaner, colder and more water for ecosystems with benefits for fisheries, wildlife and aquatic habitat and improved fish passage. Study and design work is eligible for \$500,000 to \$2M, and construction projects \$3M to \$20M. A non-federal cost share of at least 35% is required. Learn more about this at <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/>.

### **CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES** **FY24 Appropriations/U.S. Geological Survey**

On July 27, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported its FY2024 spending bill for the U.S. Department of the Interior and other agencies (S. 2605) by a bipartisan 28-0 vote.

S. 2605 would provide \$308.72M for the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) Water Resources programs, which is \$3.786M above the FY2023 enacted level and \$5.133M below the budget request. Program elements include: Water Availability and Use Science – \$74.296M for "integrated water prediction to continue to utilize the best available technology to develop advanced modeling tools, state-of-the-art forecasts, and decision

support systems and to incorporate these capabilities into daily water operations....”; National Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program \$117.844M with USGS encouraged to work with research organizations and the power industry to identify and address critical information gaps to better prepare for adverse stream conditions; and Next Generation Water Observing System (NGWOS) – \$29.5M to continue to work with universities and other partners to develop innovative water resource sensor technologies that are scalable to regional and national monitoring network operations.

The Committee recognized that understanding current streamflow conditions is vital to estimating flood frequency and monitoring flooding. It encouraged USGS to work with academic partners using advanced computing techniques to develop advanced next-generation water observing systems.

The Committee believes that robust participation with universities in the hydrologic sciences is essential to building a talent pipeline as well as building capacity to support future hydrological research and operational efforts. To support this, the bill continues funding of \$2M within the Water Availability and Use Science Program and \$2M within the National Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program to pursue such cooperative research agreements, including considering universities in Western States facing groundwater management challenges to build capacity and expertise in groundwater hydrologic sciences.

The Committee recommends \$100.08M for the National Water Quality Program; \$16M for the Water Resources Research Act (Public Law 88–379) Program; and \$5.237M for congressionally directed spending for Special Initiatives.

The bill would add \$1.75M for regional Integrated Water Availability Assessment studies to expand into monitoring the hydrology of saline lakes in the Great Basin and the migratory birds and other wildlife dependent on those habitats; \$1M for USGS; and \$1M for the U.S.-Mexico transboundary aquifer project in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, to increase its investment in streamflow permanence modeling in the Pacific Northwest.

### **Transboundary Rivers**

The bill provides \$5.37M to support and maintain the operational capacity of existing streamgages on certain transboundary rivers, including those at risk from mining pollution originating in Canada, such as in the Kootenai watershed. This includes at least \$1.5M for implementation of the baseline strategy for transboundary rivers, as outlined by USGS’s Water Quality Baseline Assessment for Transboundary Rivers;

\$120,000 for the streamgage on the Unuk River; and an additional \$1.5M above enacted levels for expanded water quality monitoring and analysis efforts in the Kootenai watershed to support interagency efforts to evaluate and reduce transboundary pollution through the installation of new streamgages, expanded analyses, and related activities.

The Committee recognized the ongoing monitoring of critical water budget components in the Klamath Basin to provide the information needed to assess controls of inflow to Upper Klamath Lake from surface water and groundwater, improve snowmelt prediction, and forecast impacts of drought and other drivers on water availability for both human and ecological uses. The bill provides \$3M to expand this work.

The Committee directs USGS to continue to expand its streamgage monitoring of transboundary watersheds and to work with the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure the relevant equipment is deployed to the Kootenai watershed to support the agency’s work to evaluate and reduce transboundary pollution. The Committee continued the direction that USGS enter into a “formal partnership with local Tribes and other Federal agencies as necessary in the area to develop a water quality strategy for the transboundary rivers. The Committee requests a briefing from the Survey to the Committee within 90 days of enactment of this act on the Survey’s progress.”

### **MEETINGS**

#### **Western States Water Council - Fall Meetings**

The WSWC Fall Meetings will be held in Anchorage, Alaska on September 12-14, at the Aloft Anchorage Hotel. There is no registration fee to attend the meetings, but we are asking all individuals participating in person, or virtually to register. For further details please see: <https://westernstateswater.org/events/wswc-2023-fall-meetings/>.

#### **Schedule of Meetings**

##### **Tuesday, September 12**

8:00 am – Field Trip

##### **Wednesday, September 13**

8:00 am Host State Presentation

8:45 am Water Resources Committee Meeting

12:00 pm Executive Committee (over lunch)

1:30 pm Water Quality Committee Meeting

3:15 pm Legal Committee Meeting

6:00 pm Social Hour

##### **Thursday, September 14**

8:00 am WSWC Full Council (202nd) Meeting

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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.**