



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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WESTERN GOVERNORS/WATER RESOURCES

Kansas

On April 16, Governor Laura Kelly (D-KS) announced \$18M in grant funding for 34 municipalities and water districts for technical assistance, water projects, and water project loan assistance. The funding comes through the State Water Plan, fully funded last year for the first time since 2008. The legislature designated \$35M to protect essential water resources, which includes this round of grants. Applications for this first round of funding included 122 for technical assistance and 187 for water projects. The Kansas Water Office prioritized projects which addressed or included emergent water issues, socioeconomic and community factors, conservation plans, and populations of fewer than 2,000 residents.

Connie Owen, Director of the Kansas Water Office said: "The volume of applications is a testament to the value that this funding has to Kansans. We are excited to see its impact on Kansas communities."

State Rep. (and former WSWC member) Kenny Titus (R) said: "A critical component of expanding funding for the State Water Plan is ensuring that every Kansan has access to safe drinking water. The ability to provide technical assistance and matching funds allows access to grants and funding opportunities that were previously out of reach for our smaller communities."

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES

Bureau of Reclamation/WaterSMART

On May 6, the Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) WaterSMART program announced \$147.6M in funding to support drought resiliency water infrastructure projects. USBR will supply grants for a total of 42 projects across Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Awards will support projects that build or upgrade infrastructure, recharge aquifers, advance water recycling and treatment, and strengthen innovative technologies to address water scarcity. www.usbr.gov/newsroom/news-release/4821

Recipients included the Stanfield Groundwater Supply and Treatment Project (\$9.1M) in Arizona; the Fresno Wellhead Treatment System to remove manganese and other naturally-occurring contaminants (\$734,452) and the State Water Interconnection Project (\$5M) in California; the Walker River Paiute Tribe Domestic Water Supply Project (\$2.4M) in Nevada; the Drought Resilient Groundwater Well Project (\$9.5M) in New Mexico; the Wuabay and Day County Drought Resiliency Project (\$9.9M) in South Dakota; and the Santa Rosa Water System Drought Resiliency Project (\$9.5M) in Texas.

USBR Commissioner Camille Touton said: "With... President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are investing in locally led projects to help build drought resilience. These projects focus on improving water management strategies, infrastructure and efficiency to mitigate the impacts of drought on communities, agriculture and ecosystems."

CONGRESS/WATER RESOURCES

Water Data

On May 1, Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) introduced the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Access Data Collection Act. The bill would improve national data collection and interagency coordination on water access for rural, tribal, and other underserved communities. It would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to create and chair a working group known as the "Water and Sanitation Needs Working Group." The group would survey households to estimate water access gaps throughout the country and report on the costs of needed improvements to close those gaps. The bill would also authorize annual appropriations of \$10M for FY25-FY29.

Wyden said: "Access to clean drinking water is a human right. Yet, communities in Oregon and nationwide have repeatedly been left with contaminated water or none at all. Making sure there is accurate data that reflects the needs of all communities – and keeping agencies in lock step – is a crucial first step in closing the water access gap forever."

Merkley said: “Reliable access to clean drinking water is vital to the health and safety of all communities in Oregon and the United States. So many underserved communities lack access to safe basic necessities – this is wrong. The WASH Access Data Collection Act prioritizes data collection on water access needs across our country, which will help us address and eliminate the water access gap once and for all.”

Luján said: “Every community in New Mexico and across the country, especially those on rural and Tribal lands, deserve reliable access to water. In order to make this a reality, the federal government needs the most accurate information to understand gaps in water access. That’s why I’m introducing this legislation that will improve federal capabilities to collect data on water access needs across the country.”

Farm Bill

On May 1, the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee each released overviews of their respective Farm Bill proposals. Full drafts of either bill have not been released, although the House is scheduled to markup its Farm Bill on May 23. Both summaries proposed pulling \$14B of unused funds from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to fund Farm Bill programs.

Senate Agriculture Chair Debbie Stabenow’s (D-MI) proposal focused on climate-smart farming, expansion of nutrition programs, and the protection of the environment. It included provisions to make greenhouse gas reductions a higher priority in conservation programs. The proposed bill also expands the acreage cap for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and expands the definition of eligible grassland to include rangeland, pastureland, and pastureland devoted to silvopasture. The proposed bill would also require a new training center for prescribed fire, create a permanent disaster fund, and would increase funding for the Forest Service’s Water Source Protection Program.

House Agriculture Chair Glenn Thompson’s (R-PA) proposal supports farm safety net programs, continued financial and technical assistance for producers, easement reform, and incentivizing public-private partnerships in forest management. Thompson’s proposal said the House bill “protects and enhances” the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). It also proposed to streamline program administration for the Regional Conservation Stewardship Program (RCPP), the Technical Service Provider Program (TSP) and P.L. 566. The bill would also incentivize enrollment of marginal lands and emphasize state partnerships.

CONGRESS/WATER QUALITY **Senate/EPA/FY25 Budget**

On May 8, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held a hearing to question EPA Administrator Michael Regan on the FY25 Budget.

Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE) emphasized the importance of funding the EPA, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) for meeting statutory and regulatory obligations, and of EPA’s new regulations on public health. He said: “Those of us who care about the future of the planet – and I believe that’s every one of us – want an EPA that has resources that it needs to...combat the greatest threat that we face today...and that’s the climate crisis.”

Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) questioned Regan on EPA’s new regulations and the costs imposed by them. On EPA’s recent Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) designations (WSW #2605) she said: “Foundational environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, are based on the principle of cooperative federalism.... Typically, states lead in managing environmental protection within their borders, while the EPA provides support and only steps in when the state does not act.”

WATER RESOURCES

WestFAST/USGS/3D Hydrography Program

On May 8, the Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) held a webinar regarding the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) new 3D Hydrography Program (3DHP). Stephen Aichele, USGS National Geospatial Program, gave an overview of the data collection, management, and current and anticipated products. 3DHP is the first systematic remapping of the nation’s hydrography since the original USGS 1:24,000-scale topographic mapping program was active (1947-1992). The program will employ 3D Elevation Program (3DEP) topographic elevation data to derive stream network datasets and watersheds. It will also use other elevation derivatives to support hydrologic and hydraulic modeling. USGS Water Mission Area will collaborate with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to integrate 3DHP with Geoconnex and the Internet of Water, making its data discoverable through location search. Data acquisition will follow best practices such as formal governance structures, collaborative acquisition, as well as formal transparent specifications and data validation practices. See <https://westernstateswater.org/events/introducing-the-3d-hydrography-program/>

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.