



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION

Army Corps of Engineers-Nationwide Permits

On June 18, the Army Corps of Engineers issued its proposal to renew and revise 56 of its 57 existing Nationwide Permits (NPPs) for work in wetlands, and to issue a new nationwide permit authorizing “activities to improve the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms” (Docket Number: COE-2025-0002). The Corps is proposing revisions to several NPPs, including those for approved categorical exclusions, State or Tribe assumed Clean Water Act Section 404 programs, aquatic restoration, hydropower, and bridges. These changes aim to expand or clarify authorized activities, some in response to litigation following the issuance of a number of NPPs in 2021 (WSW #2436). The Corps also plans to update general conditions and definitions to improve clarity and public understanding, while maintaining environmental protections. The goal is to streamline permitting for projects with minimal environmental impacts. The Corps would not reissue NPPs for finfish aquaculture farms because of ongoing litigation.

The new NPP titled, “Activities to Improve the Passage of Fish and Other Aquatic Organisms,” would authorize “...activities to restore or enhance the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms, as well as other ecological processes such as the transport of water, sediment and nutrients, around or through barriers so that they can access other aquatic habitats,” including nature-based solutions such as nature-like fishways that provide a path for fish and other aquatic organisms to move past dams and weirs.

The Corps requested public comment on all the proposed changes to nationwide permits (NPPs), general conditions, and definitions, including those for which no changes are proposed. The Corps urged commenters to review the full text. The Corps also invited suggestions on situations that may warrant NPP coverage, but are not currently included. The 30-day comment period will end on July 18. <https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Regulatory-Program-and-Permits/>

Columbia River/Presidential Memo

On June 12, President Trump signed a memorandum titled, “Stopping Radical Environmentalism to Generate Power for the Columbia River Basin. The memo revokes Biden’s September 2023 memo, “Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and Other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin,” which set a national policy priority to restore native fish populations and honor tribal treaty rights in the Columbia River Basin.

In his memo, Trump said furtherance of the 2023 memo led the Biden Administration to consider breaching four dams on the Lower Snake River, which, if completed, “...would be devastating for the region.” He cited the loss of 3,000 megawatts of “low-cost, baseload energy,” shipping channels, water supply, and recreational opportunities. The memo further directs the Administration to withdraw from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, a \$1B settlement reached in September 2023 with the Nez Perce, Yakama, Warm Springs and Umatilla tribal nations, as well as the States of Oregon and Washington (WSW #2641). The memo further directed federal agencies to rescind and as appropriate reissue a “Notice of Intent” to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on system operations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

EPA-Office of the Inspector General

On June 16, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) released an audit report on the extent to which the EPA prioritizes and awards Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds to tribes through the Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Grant (CWISA) Program and the Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants – Tribal Set-Aside (DWIG-TSA) Program, in accordance with applicable statutes, regulations, and EPA guidance. OIG found, “About \$86.3M, or roughly 57%, of the \$152.1M allocated in FY2022 IIJA tribal set-aside funds were not awarded to tribes in a timely manner.... [A]bout \$125.3M (~76%) of the \$164.1M allocated in FY2023 IIJA tribal set-aside funds had not been awarded to Tribes. As of December 2023, about \$140.6M (~93%) of the FY2022 and FY2023 DWIG-TSA funds allocated for emerging contaminants

and lead service line replacements had not been awarded to tribal projects.”

“We recommend that the assistant administrator for Water develop a process to ensure that IJA tribal set-aside program funds are allocated to the regional offices in a timely manner; evaluate the new CWISA guidance; determine what additional guidance is needed for the DWIG-TSA IJA Emerging Contaminants and Lead Service Line Replacement funds and develop needed guidance; provide guidance to regional offices regarding pre-award recordkeeping requirements; and ensure that EPA Regions 3, 5, 6, and 8 establish a quantifiable method to prioritize drinking water projects. Four of the recommendations are resolved with corrective actions pending. Two of the recommendations are unresolved, and resolution efforts are in progress.” <https://www.epa.gov/reports/audit-epas-water-infrastructure-set-aside-grants-tribes>

Executive Order/Wildfire

On June 12, President Trump signed an executive order titled, “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response,” to modernize federal support for wildfire preparedness and response. Citing the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, the order argued the severity was due to state and local mismanagement and lack of preparedness. “Wildfires threaten every region, yet many local government entities continue to disregard commonsense preventative measures.” To the maximum extent consistent with the law, the order directs the Administration to “consolidate their wildland fire programs to achieve the most efficient and effective use of wildland fire offices, coordinating bodies, programs, budgets, procurement processes, and research and, as necessary, recommend additional measures to advance this objective.” The agencies are to expand partnerships; incentivize responsible land management; develop a tech roadmap; promote risk-based wildfire policies; and reduce regulatory obstacles. The order also calls for reviewing rules that hinder prescribed burns, fire retardants, and forest material use. It orders the Defense Department to declassify satellite data, and encourages the sale of surplus military aircraft and parts to aid firefighting.

Nominations/Bureau of Reclamation

On June 16, President Trump nominated Theodore Cooke as Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner. Dr. Cooke served as General Manager of the Central Arizona Project (CAP) from 2015 to 2022. He currently serves as a Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) of Arizona board member. Arizona Senate Republican leader T.J. Shope said: “Dr. Cooke is

thoughtful, has a history of collaboration, thinks outside the box to formulate solutions, and has a track record of finding a consensus among all parties at the table. This is why he was appointed by the Arizona Senate to serve on WIFA. Dr. Cooke is exactly who the Department of Interior needs and will be more aggressive in facilitating an agreement among the seven Colorado River Basin States on water allocations, as he did with negotiating Arizona’s entrance into the Drought Contingency Plan.”

WATER RESOURCES **USGS/LANDSAT**

On June 4, the Landsat 7 satellite received its final transmission from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The data collected by the satellite from 1999 to 2024 is part of Landsat’s 50-plus year record of imaging our planet’s surface and are preserved in the USGS Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS) Center archive. After ending its official mission in 2024, the USGS prepared Landsat 7 for decommissioning to follow responsible space practices and U.S. policies on keeping space clear of debris. The final steps included lowering the satellite’s orbit to decrease the risk of collisions and ensuring that all energy sources, such as fuel and batteries, are depleted to prevent the satellite from accidentally turning back on or creating debris. Landsat 7 will drift silently in orbit for about 55 years before reentering Earth’s atmosphere. In total, Landsat 7 spent more than 8,900 days orbiting the Earth collecting data. Data products generated from Landsat 7 account for over 3 petabytes added to the USGS remote sensing archive.

Sarah Ryker, USGS Acting Director, said, “The Landsat satellites have delivered over 50 years of extraordinary science data, economic value and national security benefits by informing decisions in every sector of the economy – from monitoring drought in the West to guiding disaster recovery. For 25 of those years, Landsat 7’s data helped farmers, land managers, city planners, and scientists, as well as communities around the world better understand and manage land, water, and other natural resources.”

Tim Newman, Program Coordinator for the USGS National Land Imaging Program called Landsat 7 “...a transformational bridge between the past and the future of Earth observation.” He added, “Landsat 7 sustained decades of continuity by evolving satellite observations and data products to meet changing priorities and national needs. Its unqualified value to the Nation in science and operational applications helped ensure the future of the long-running Landsat program, inspiring even more capable operational missions like Landsat 8 and 9 and the revolutionary new Landsat Next, now in development.” <https://www.usgs.gov/landsat-missions/news/a-final-fare-well-landsat-7>

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