



NEVADA DIVISION OF
WATER RESOURCES



March 31, 2026

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

As you consider priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill, we write on behalf of the stakeholders below to urge continued bipartisan support for the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) work with the OpenET Consortium and to request \$5 million of funding within the USGS Water Availability and Use Science Program for this public-private partnership.

Evapotranspiration (ET) represents the largest share of consumptive water use nationwide. OpenET leverages leading science and technology to provide accessible, satellite-based ET data that supports quantification of water use, assessing water supply and demand, water budgets, and hydrologic forecasting. USGS plays a critical role in providing water data for our nation and is a key federal partner of the OpenET Consortium, which includes more than 40 scientists and engineers across federal agencies, universities, and nonprofit and private sector partners, including the Environmental Defense Fund.

Growing pressure on the nation's water resources requires more advanced, data-driven management. OpenET delivers field-scale ET information from an ensemble of six models, enabling improved decision-making across federal, state, and local levels.

Robust funding of \$5 million in FY 2027 would ensure continued delivery of publicly accessible, transparent, and scientifically rigorous ET data to America's farmers, ranchers, and water managers. It would also support ongoing scientific advancement, technology improvements, and expanded data

access. With prior appropriations, OpenET expanded ET data coverage from 23 western states to the entire contiguous United States this past December.

At this level of funding, the OpenET Consortium would further improve accuracy by updating core meteorological model inputs, addressing temporal satellite data gaps through time-integration improvements and by applying data fusion techniques to other satellite missions. It would also enable short-term ET forecasts to support more precise irrigation management. Additional investments would advance further model development, expand ground-based validation, improve understanding of ET across natural landscapes, including forests and rangelands. Funding would also sustain and enhance the OpenET platform and customization of new and existing tools to support individual growers and producers, and ensure that OpenET data users across the country can continue reliably accessing ET data to inform water management.

Additionally, such funding would support OpenET Consortium research and development, including the integration and application of complementary datasets that are essential for many U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Resources Mission Area (WRMA) programs, while strengthening coordination across national programs, local Water Science Centers, alongside other federal and state partners working to improve water management.

Were Congress to significantly cut funding for OpenET in FY 2027, the operational production of ET data using an ensemble approach could be compromised, resulting in lower accuracy and delays in data availability. Further, OpenET Consortium contributions to key USGS WRMA programs would be endangered, and vital engagement and collaboration among these programs, state-based USGS Water Science Centers, OpenET Consortium partners, and state and local agencies could be severely curtailed.

In summary, we respectfully ask for \$5 million in FY2027 funding for OpenET to ensure that USGS and its partners can continue delivering and expanding the best available data and science for water use, availability, and impact assessments; development of water budgets; and hydrologic predictions, all of which have never been more important.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signed,

California State University Monterey Bay

California State Water Resources Control Board

Desert Research Institute

Environmental Defense Fund

Nevada Division of Water Resources

OpenET Inc.

Southern Nevada Water Authority

Sustainable Conservation

Western States Water Council