

DECEMBER 2021



WestFAST News

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Chair – Roger Gorke; Federal Liaison Officer – Heather Hofman

EPA Announces Water Infrastructure Funding for States Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Calls for Prioritizing Underserved Communities

EPA 12/2/21



WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael S. Regan announced funding that states, Tribes, and territories will receive in 2022 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This funding, provided through EPA’s State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs, will create jobs while upgrading America’s aging water infrastructure and addressing key challenges like lead in drinking water and per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination. In a [letter sent to Governors today](#), the Administrator encouraged states to maximize the impact of water funding from the law – an unprecedented nationwide total of \$50 billion investment – to address disproportionate

environmental burdens in historically underserved communities across the country.

“With President Biden’s leadership and congressional action, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has created a historic opportunity to correct longstanding environmental and economic injustices across America,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “As leaders, we must seize this moment. Billions of dollars are about to start flowing to states and it is critical that EPA partners with states, Tribes, and territories to ensure the benefits of these investments are delivered in the most equitable way.”

EPA will allocate \$7.4 billion to states, Tribes, and territories for 2022, with nearly half of this funding available as grants or principal forgiveness loans that remove barriers to investing in essential water infrastructure in underserved communities across rural America and in urban centers. The 2022 allocation is the first of five years of nearly \$44 billion in dedicated EPA SRF funding that states will receive through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. For more than 30 years, the SRFs have been the foundation of water infrastructure investments, providing low-cost financing for local projects across America. However, many vulnerable communities facing water challenges have not received their fair share of federal water infrastructure funding. Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, states have a unique opportunity to correct this disparity.

Administrator Regan recently completed a “Journey to Justice” tour across the American South where he

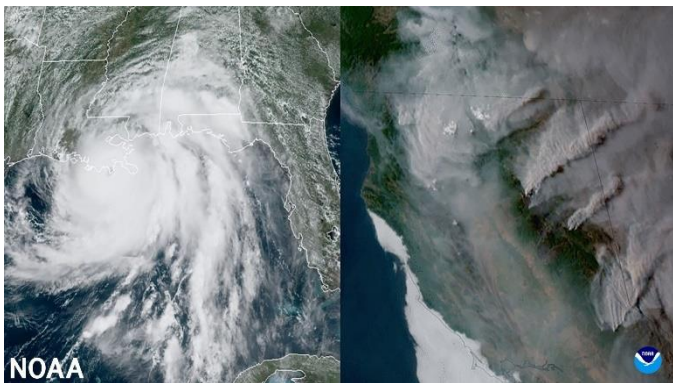
heard from families and advocates about their struggles with exposure to water pollution in their communities. For children, exposure to lead can cause irreversible and life-long health effects, including decreasing IQ, focus, and academic achievement. At the same time, families that live near high levels of contaminants such as PFAS or “forever chemicals” are at risk to develop adverse health outcomes.

The implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law calls for strong partnership, and EPA stands ready to work with states to ensure that communities see the full benefits of this investment.

For more information, including state-by-state allocation of 2022 funding, and a breakdown of EPA funding by SRF program, and additional funding available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/infrastructure>. EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

New NOAA tool pinpoints natural disaster risk down to county level Focus areas

NOAA 12/9/21



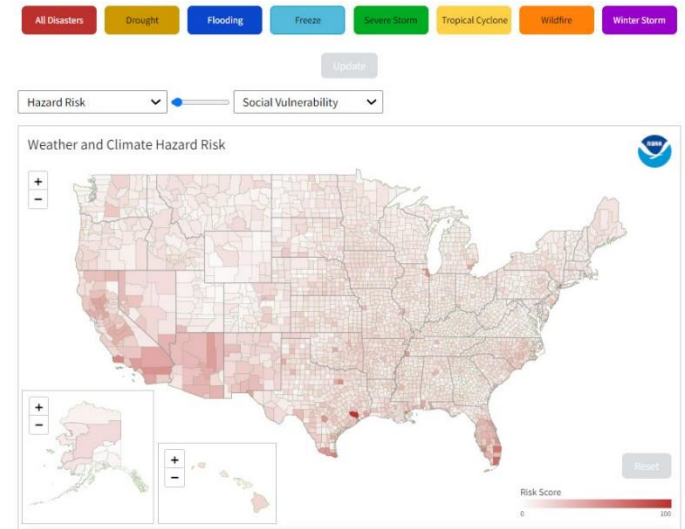
(Left) Hurricane Ida making landfall in Louisiana, as seen by the GOES-16 satellite on August 29, 2021. (Right) Smoke plumes from numerous California wildfires, as seen from the GOES-17 satellite on August 23, 2021. Ida and the western wildfires were two of the U.S. weather and climate disasters in 2021 that each exceeded \$1 billion in damages. (NOAA Satellites)

NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) has released an innovative mapping tool that provides county-level information on natural disaster hazards across the United States.

This new feature provides significant enhancements to the state-level data on [NOAA’s Billion-Dollar Disasters website](#).

Developed by NCEI with data from NOAA, FEMA and academic institutions, this interactive [NOAA mapping tool](#) provides detailed information on a location’s susceptibility to weather and climate hazards that can lead to billion-dollar disasters—such as wildfires, floods, drought and heat waves, tornado outbreaks, and hurricanes. The tool expands upon FEMA’s National Risk Index to provide a view of a location’s risk for, and vulnerability to, single or multiple combinations of weather and climate hazards for every county and county-equivalent in all 50 states, and the District of Columbia.

“Understanding hazard risk and social vulnerability at the county level are increasingly important to mitigating weather and climate hazards,” said Adam Smith, lead for NOAA NCEI’s Billion-Dollar Disaster Program. “A location’s risk depends on several factors, including population, infrastructure and exposure to natural hazards. Vulnerability reflects a county’s ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from hazards based on socioeconomic factors. This new mapping tool can be a source for homeowners, community planners, emergency managers and other decision makers to help prepare for and mitigate natural disasters in their community.”



This screenshot of NOAA's county hazard risk map shows the combined county-level hazard risk for all seven billion-dollar weather and climate disaster types NOAA tracks (drought/heat waves, flooding, freeze/cold waves, severe storms, tropical cyclones, wildfires, and winter storms). Darker red represents higher risk, lighter red represents lower risk. (NOAA)

This online resource comes at a time when the number and cost of billion-dollar disasters in the U.S. has been increasing. In 2020 alone, the nation experienced an unprecedented 22 separate billion-dollar climate and weather disasters that killed at least 262 people. As of October 8, 2021, the U.S. had been impacted by 18 separate billion-dollar disasters with total, direct losses of \$104.8 billion—already more costly than 2020.

“The increasing number and cost of billion-dollar disasters can be linked to a combination of factors, including increased exposure, social vulnerability and climate change,” said Russell Vose, chief of the NOAA NCEI Climatic Analysis and Synthesis Branch. “This new tool will support informed decision-making for saving lives and protecting property across the United States.”

Since 1980, the U.S. has sustained 308 weather and climate disasters where overall damages/costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion. The total cost of these 308 events exceeds \$2.085 trillion, with \$700 billion in damages during the last five years. NOAA will continue developing tools like this in order to deliver authoritative climate and data services to the public. Watch this demonstration to learn how to [navigate this new tool](#).

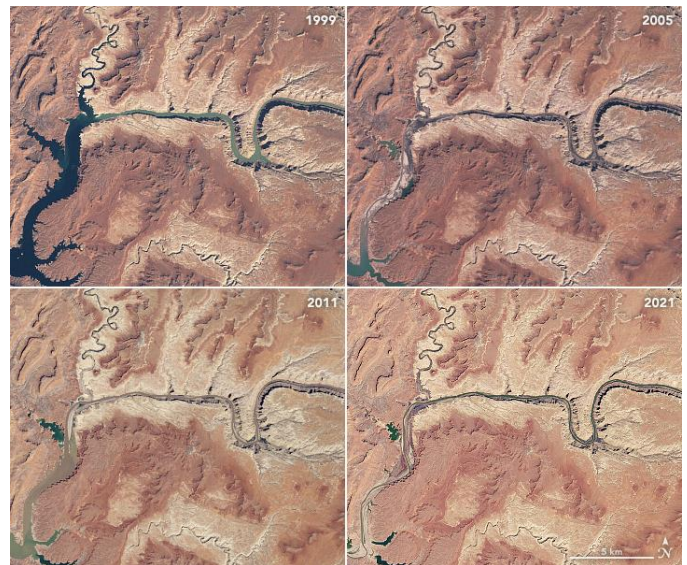
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Report: Climate change contributed to some of 2020’s worst weather

NOAA 12/15/21

New research reinforces consensus that humans have created a new climate

Failed monsoon rains that reignited the southwestern U.S. drought. A spring heat wave in western Europe. Intense Siberian wildfires. Scientists say human-caused climate change made these extreme weather events more likely, according to new research published today in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society (BAMS).



Lake Powell has fallen to its lowest level on record since it was first filled more than 50 years ago. The natural-color images above were acquired in March 1999, April 2005, May 2011, and April 2021 by the Landsat 5, 7, and 8 satellites. Springtime typically marks the lowest water levels before mountaintop snow starts to melt and run down into the watershed. The images capture years with the two highest and lowest levels over the past 22 years. (For a year-by-year view, see the Earth Observatory feature [World of Change: Water Level in Lake Powell](#).)

Among the findings:

- A NOAA study that examined the U.S. Southwest drought using several different model simulations found climate change may have increased the likelihood that the monsoon-season rains would fail as they did in 2020, reigniting a multiyear drought that shows no sign of relenting.
- The extremely warm and wet winter over Northwest Russia in 2019 and 2020 was only possible due to climate change, another study concluded.
- A heat wave in western Europe in May 2020 was made 40 times more likely by human caused climate change, one paper found.
- Extreme wildfires in Siberia during 2020 were caused by weather conditions that are up to 80% more likely than a century ago as a result of global warming.

One trend emerging in the past several years is a number of studies that find climate change is reducing the risk of certain types of extreme events, typically cold outbreaks or heavy precipitation.

- Climate change decreased the likelihood of the exceptional April 2020 cold spell over Northern China by 80%, one study found.
- Four separate studies that examined 2020's record-breaking annual spring rains in China found the downpours were less likely and less intense than they would have been without climate change.

“This report reinforces the scientific consensus that human influence has created a new climate — one that is impacting extreme events today,” said Stephanie Herring, a NOAA climate scientist and editor of the Explaining Extreme Events report. “As humans continue to emit billions of tons of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, these extreme weather impacts are highly likely to increase.”

Read the full [news release](#) and [Explaining Extreme Events report](#) issued by the American Meteorology Society.

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For AMS: [Rachel Thomas-Medwid](#), rthomas@ametsoc.org, (978) 621-3070

Upcoming Meetings and Webinars

WestFAST Webinars: WestFAST is hosting a [series of webinars](#) to discuss the importance of water resources related to wildfire prevention, reduction, recovery, and rehabilitation:

January 5th – [The Relationship Between Wildfires, Geologic Hazards, and Climate Change](#)

January 27th – [Burned Area Emergency Response \(BAER\)](#)

Bureau of Land Management roundtable-style webinar on the federal orphaned well program

January 6th – 2:30pm-4:00pm EST; 12:30pm-2:00pm MST; 10:30am-12:00pm AKST

Please register at this Zoom link: https://blm.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/W_N_8f9RtNk1Tn-g84xEtJSyBw

Bureau of Reclamation tribal or stakeholder information session on its implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

TRIBES January 7th, 11 am eastern: [Click here to join the meeting](#) or join by phone: 1 719-733-3211, passcode, 728 900 174#

STAKEHOLDERS January 7th, 3 pm eastern: [Click here to join the meeting](#) or join by phone: 1 719-733-3211, 635 366 943#

2022 WSWC Spring (198th) Meetings and Washington Roundtable

April 5-7, 2022 – Crystal City, VA

Other Federal News

USBR 12/1/21. [Statement on the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)

EPA 12/3/21. [EPA Invites 39 New Projects to Apply for Water Infrastructure Loans](#)

USBR 12/7/21. [Reclamation initiates selection process for Basin Studies and Water Management Options Pilots](#)

USBR 12/7/21. [Reclamation launches new prize competition to improve snowpack water forecasts](#)

DOI 12/8/21. [Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland Highlights Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Tribal Funding During Washington Visit](#)

FWS 12/8/21. [A New Landscape Conservation Task Force is Established between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.](#)

USGS 12/9/21. [New User Interface for the Water Quality Portal](#)

NRCS 12/10/21. [USDA Funds Innovative Approaches and Technologies to Improve Conservation on Private Lands](#)

NOAA 12/13/21. [November 2021 was Earth's 4th warmest on record](#)

NASA 12/14/21. [Remembering 2021's Disasters - Storymap](#)

NOAA 12/14/21. Arctic Report Card: Climate change transforming Arctic into ‘dramatically different state’

NOAA 12/15/21. New ocean floats to boost global network essential for weather, climate research

12/17/21. Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Homeland Security Jointly Establish New Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

DOI 12/20/21. Biden-Harris Administration Establishes Committee to Support Wildlife Conservation and Recreation Opportunities

EPA 12/20/21. EPA Announces Nationwide Monitoring Effort to Better Understand Extent of PFAS in Drinking Water

USBR 12/20/21. Reclamation releases \$210 million spend plan for drought and fire suppression in the West

EPA 12/21/21. EPA’s New Report Shows How Climate Change is Influencing Seasonal Events in the U.S. and Impacting Peoples’ Health and Environment

NRCS 12/22/21. USDA Invests Nearly \$5 Million in Wetland Mitigation Banks

ACOE 12/28/21. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announces publication of a set of 41 Nationwide Permits

EPA 12/28/21. EPA Wraps Up A Year of Significant Accomplishments

USBR 12/29/21. Reclamation application period gets underway for aging infrastructure with funding from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

People

DOI 12/13/21. Winnie Stachelberg Joins Interior Department as Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator

USBR 12/15/21. Camille Touton Sworn In as Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner

NPS 12/16/21. Charles F. Sams III Sworn In as National Park Service Director

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council (WSWC), and the Western Governors Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.