

JANUARY 2023



# WestFAST News

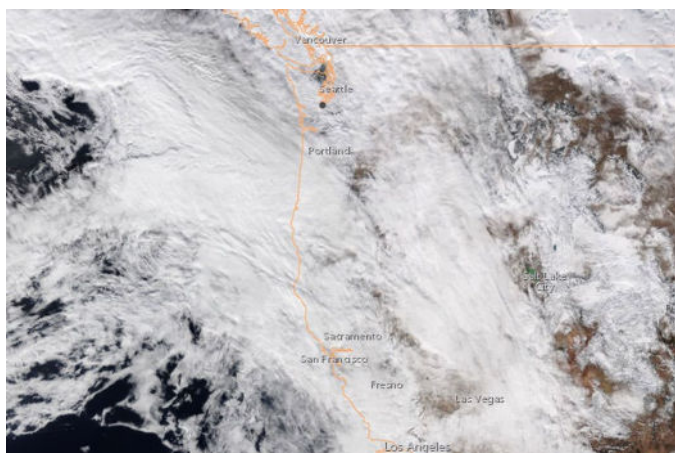
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Chair – Roger Gorke; Federal Liaison Officer – Madeline Franklin

## December 2022 Water Levels Break Eight Historical Records

*From Alaska to Washington, several of NOAA's water level stations observed their highest recorded water levels.*

NOAA 1/19/2023



*A winter storm as seen from NOAA's GOES satellite on December 29, 2022, in the Pacific Northwest. The storm coincided with higher-than-normal high tides, resulting in high tide flooding across Washington. Credit: NOAA*

December was an active month for NOAA's National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON). A staggering eight stations observed all-time high water levels — some of which broke records in place for 40 years. The Pacific Northwest was the most affected region, with four locations in the state of Washington observing their highest-ever water levels on record.

**Friday Harbor, Washington** station: Water levels reached 3.60 feet (1.1 meters) above **Mean Higher High Water (MHHW)**. This station's previous record was 3.38 ft (1.03m) above MHHW, set on December 16, 1982. Station records go back to 1934.

**Seattle, Washington** station: Water levels reached 3.76 ft (1.15m) above MHHW. This station's previous record was 3.16 ft (.96m), set on January 7, 2022. Station records go back to 1899.

**Tacoma, Washington** station: Water levels reached 3.90 ft (1.19m) above MHHW. This station's previous record was 3.27 ft (1m), set on January 7, 2022. Station records go back to 1997.

**Port Townsend, Washington**: Water levels reached 3.54 ft (1.08m) above MHHW. This station's previous record was 3.08 ft (.94m), set on December 16, 1982. Station records go back to 1972.

In addition to Washington's stations, new water level records were set at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, and two water level stations in Alaska: Sand Point and King Cove.

**Quonset Point, Rhode Island** station: Water levels reached 3.72 ft (1.13m) above Mean Higher High Water (MHHW). This station's previous record was 3.22 ft (.98m) above MHHW, set on April 16, 2007. Station records go back to 1999.

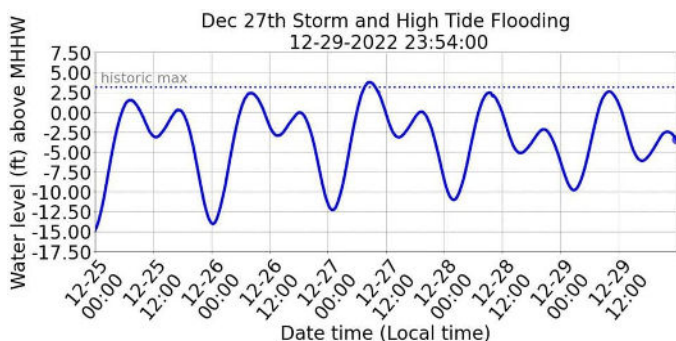
**Sand Point, Alaska** station: Water levels reached 4.68 ft (1.43m) above Mean Higher High Water (MHHW). This station's previous record was 4.25 ft (1.3m) above MHHW, set on December 31, 1986. Station records go back to 1972.

**King Cove, Alaska** station: Water levels reached 4.98 ft (1.52m) above MHHW. This station's previous record was 4.29 ft (1.31m), set on January 30, 2007. Station records go back to 1917.

**Nikolski, Alaska station:** Water levels reached 2.82 ft (.86m) above MHHW. This station's previous record was 2.54 ft (.77m), set on January 9, 2021. Station records go back to 2006.

### Leading contributors: high tide flooding and winter storms

**High tide flooding** happens when higher than normal high tides, such as a **perigean spring tide**, combine with sea level rise and, in some areas, coastal subsidence. While coastal flooding does not always occur during a perigean spring tide, it can increase the likelihood of minor high tide flooding in low-lying areas. This type of flooding, frequently seen during high tide and extreme weather events, exceeds established flood impact thresholds. Even minor high tide flooding events can result in inundated roads and backed up sewers. Weather conditions often compound this flooding, which can cause even more damage. This happened on December 27, 2022, when a strong winter storm hit the Pacific Northwest while tides were still above normal following the perigean spring tide.



On December 27, 2022, stations operated by NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services in Washington state observed record-breaking water levels when a winter storm hit while tides were still above normal following a perigean spring tide. This plot shows water levels between Dec. 25-29, 2022, at one station in Seattle, Washington. The X-axis shows the date and time (Pacific Standard Time). The Y-axis displays water levels in feet above Mean Higher High Water. The dotted line in the graph shows the highest water level previously recorded at this location. The solid blue line shows the observed water levels in feet.

### Planning ahead with NOAA's High Tide Bulletin

Every three months, NOAA releases its **High Tide Bulletin**. This seasonal publication predicts when coastal regions of the U.S. will experience higher than normal high tides. The bulletin alerts coastal communities to periods of extreme tidal fluctuation and is part of a suite of tools designed to lessen the effects of high tide flooding.

In 2023, NOAA plans to unveil a new model to more accurately predict when and where high tide flooding will likely occur up to a year ahead of time. This represents a major advancement in the agency's seasonal high tide flooding predictions.

### More high tide flooding expected in January and February 2023

NOAA predicts many coastal regions of the U.S. will experience higher than normal high tides between January and February 2023. The U.S. West Coast, in particular, may experience some of the highest tides between January 18-26 and February 18-21. These dates coincide with a perigean spring tide.

Visit the **NOS website** to view upcoming high tide flooding predictions for your region.

### Link between high tide flooding and sea level rise

Predictions from last year's **Sea Level Rise Technical Report** show that high tide flooding will become more common and more severe over the coming decades. As sea levels continue to rise, conditions that cause minor and moderate high tide flooding today will cause moderate and major high tide flooding by 2050. For example, the NOAA tide station at Seattle, Washington, can expect to see its high tide flooding days more than double between 2030 and 2050, increasing from **four days a year to nine days a year**.

NOAA is dedicated to providing America's coastal communities with accurate and timely products and services to understand both near- and long-term inundation risks and impacts arising from severe weather events, high tide flooding, and sea level rise. To view relative sea level trends for the nation, visit the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services' **sea level and coastal flooding information page**.

## Interior Department Welcomes Significant Progress for Indian Water Rights Settlements

DOI 1/5/2023

The Department of the Interior today celebrated significant progress by the 117th Congress to

advance settlements of Indian water rights claims and to protect Tribal sovereignty, key priorities for the federal government’s efforts to uphold its trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal communities. “Water is a sacred resource, and access to water is fundamental to human existence and economic development. Tribal water rights are crucial to ensuring the health, safety and empowerment of communities,” said Secretary Deb Haaland. “The Biden-Harris Administration was proud to support these bills, and I am grateful to the bill sponsors and committee leaders for making progress in Congress to ensure that Tribes are finally getting the water resources they have long been promised.”

Indian water rights settlements help ensure that Tribal Nations have safe, reliable water supplies; improve environmental and health concerns on reservations; and enable economic growth. These settlements have the potential to end decades of controversy and contention among Tribal Nations and neighboring communities and promote cooperation in the management of water resources. Indian water rights settlements also promote community and economic development for regions surrounding Tribal communities, as conflicts are resolved and vital infrastructure is developed. At the Department, the Secretary’s Indian Water Rights Office manages, negotiates, and oversees implementation of Indian water rights claims and is committed to continuing to work with Tribes across the West as they seek to realize their long-promised water rights.

As part of the 117th Congress’ closing activity, one settlement was enacted, another settlement was amended, and another bill affecting Tribal water rights was enacted. This includes:

**S. 4104, the Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2022:** The Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2022 settles the Tribe’s water rights claims in Arizona and is the result of over a decade of dedicated, good-faith negotiations among the tribe, the federal government, the State of Arizona, and other parties. The bill approves a settlement agreement that will provide much needed water to the Tribe and establishes a trust fund of \$312 million that the Tribe can use to develop water infrastructure on its Reservation. The Act’s provisions will help provide certainty to the Tribe and to surrounding communities regarding access to

water resources, enable Tribal economic growth, and promote Tribal sovereignty and self-sufficiency.

**S. 3168, an Act to amend the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 to modify the enforceability date for certain provisions, and for other purposes:** This Act amends the White Mountain Apache Tribe’s 2010 Settlement, which settled the Tribe’s water rights claims in Arizona. That Act authorized the design and construction of a rural water system to address the dire need for a domestic water supply on the Tribe’s Reservation. Working closely with experts at the Bureau of Reclamation, the Tribe identified critical changes to the infrastructure design along with the need for additional funding to complete the project. This amendment provides the additional \$530 million needed to complete construction of the rural water system.

**S. 3308, the Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2022:** The Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2022 authorizes the Colorado River Indian Tribes to lease, exchange, store, or conserve portions of their decreed water rights located in the State of Arizona to off-Reservation users. This Act – the product of many years of diligent negotiations among the Tribe, the State, and non-Indian water users – reflects the federal government’s commitment to Tribal self-determination and Tribal sovereignty.

These new laws supplement the significant resources provided for in President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides more than \$13 billion directly in Tribal communities across the country and makes Tribal communities eligible for billions more in much-needed investment. That includes [\\$2.5 billion to implement the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund](#), which will help deliver long-promised water resources to Tribes, certainty to all their non-Indian neighbors, and a solid foundation for future economic development for entire communities dependent on common water resources.

## Biden-Harris Administration makes \$80 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds available for projects that conserve water and improve watershed health

*Investments to help Western states, Tribes and U.S. Territories increase water supply reliability*

Reclamation 1/24/2023



*Funding is available for projects that will result in significant benefits to ecosystem or watershed health.*

The Bureau of Reclamation is making approximately \$80 million from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law available for water conservation, water management and restoration projects that will result in significant benefits to ecosystem or watershed health.

The Environmental Water Resource Projects selected in response to this funding opportunity are part of the WaterSMART Program, which received a \$1 billion boost from the Infrastructure Law.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provided \$8.3 billion for Reclamation water infrastructure projects over five years to advance drought resilience and expand access to clean water for families, farmers and wildlife. The investment will repair aging water delivery systems, secure dams, complete rural water projects, and protect aquatic ecosystems.

"Locally led water restoration projects are key to providing communities more access to clean, reliable water," said Deputy Commissioner Michael Brain. "The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is providing a significant investment for the

restoration of river and stream habitats, watershed health and the surrounding environment that will lead to increased water availability for families, farmers and Tribes."

The funding opportunity is available at [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under opportunity number R23AS00089. Applications are due by March 28, 2023, at 4 p.m. MDT.

Funding is available for up to \$3 million per project. The applicant must complete the project within three years. Total project costs must be at most \$6 million, and the projects must be part of a collaborative process to increase water resource reliability.

If applicants demonstrate that the project increases water supply reliability for ecological values, was developed as part of a collaborative process, and/or the project benefits will advance an established strategy or plan to increase the reliability of water supply for consumptive and non-consumptive ecological values, they must be capable of providing up to a 25% non-federal cost share. If they do not meet these cost-sharing requirements, applicants must be capable of providing up to a 50% non-federal cost-share.

Eligible applicants are broken into three categories:

**Category A** applicants are states, Tribes, irrigation districts and water districts; state, regional, or local authorities, the members of which include one or more organizations with water or power delivery authority; and other organizations with water or power delivery authority. All applicants must be in one of the following states or territories: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico.

**Category B** applicants are non-profit conservation organizations, including watershed groups, acting in partnership and agreement with an entity described in Category A. Category B applicants must be in the United States or one of the territories identified above, and the Category A partner must be located in one of the states or territories described in Category A.

**Category C** applicants are non-profit corporations applying for a project to improve the condition of a natural feature, such as wetlands on federal land, without a Category A partner. They must demonstrate that Category A entities do not object to the project. All Category C applicants must be in the United States or one of the territories identified in Category A.

The Bureau of Reclamation will host a webinar on Monday, February 6, 2023, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. MST to discuss eligible applicants and project types, program requirements, and the evaluation criteria for the Environmental Water Resources Projects funding opportunity and the upcoming Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Program. Click [here](#) to join the live event or use the same link to watch a recording after the completion of the live event.

If you have questions regarding applicant and project eligibility, program requirements, or the evaluation criteria for the Environmental Water Resources Projects, click [here](#) and select Environmental Water Resource Projects Inquiry to schedule a time to talk with the program coordinators.

To learn more about this and other funding opportunities, please view [www.usbr.gov/watersmart](http://www.usbr.gov/watersmart).

## **EPA Launches New Initiative to Accelerate Lead Pipe Replacement to Protect Underserved Communities**

*New partnership with states will help communities access funds from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for lead service line removal and replacement*

EPA 1/27/2023

Today, EPA will announce a major new initiative to accelerate progress toward the Biden-Harris Administration's goal of achieving 100% lead service line removal and replacement. The "Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerators" initiative

will be introduced during a White House convening with Vice President Kamala Harris and EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan, alongside state and local leaders celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan. The new Accelerator will provide targeted technical assistance services to help underserved communities access funds from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and replace lead pipes that pose risks to the health of children and families. The initiative is a partnership with the Department of Labor, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Wisconsin and will work with 40 communities across those states in 2023.

"The science is clear—there is no safe level of exposure to lead," said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. "EPA is committed to partnering with states and communities to protect children and families and ensure our nation's drinking water pipes are lead-free. Our Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerators demonstrate our commitment to ensuring every community has access to safe, clean drinking water. By leveraging the historic investment made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we are moving one step closer to achieving President Biden's vision of 100% lead-free water systems for all."

Through the Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Accelerators, EPA will provide hands-on support to guide communities through the process of lead service line removals, from start to finish. This will include support in developing lead service line replacement plans, conducting inventories to identify lead pipes, increasing community outreach and education efforts, and supporting applications for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. As a result, more communities will be able to access their fair share of federal funds to secure a lead-free future.

Partnership is core to the LSLR Accelerators initiative. EPA will collaborate each step of the way with Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Wisconsin and applauds their leadership in seeking innovative new ways to accelerate lead pipe removal. The Accelerators initiative will support these states in more strategically deploying funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) for lead service line replacements while developing best practices and creative approaches that can

serve as a roadmap for the rest of the country. As this program moves forward, EPA and the Department of Labor will collaborate to provide tools aimed at increasing job quality standards, equity, and resources to accelerate the development of the skilled water workforce needed to undertake these community and system-wide lead service line replacement programs.

“Connecticut is proud to be one of the four states involved with the Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerators Community Initiative which is critical toward investing in safe drinking water and ultimately protecting the health of our communities,” said Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont. “The Lead Service Line Accelerators will address existing barriers and accelerate progress on these projects. Inviting input from our residents, providing educational resources, and engaging affected members of the community are necessary components in identifying and ultimately replacing these lead service lines.”

“Our historically underserved communities know all too well the severe damage that lead exposure can inflict upon children and families,” said New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy. “As a result of my Administration’s aggressive and ongoing lead pipe replacement efforts, we also know that no state in the country is better suited to continue serving as a national model for lead remediation than New Jersey. We are eager to continue working alongside our federal and regional partners to eradicate this grave public health threat once and for all.”

“Pennsylvanians have a constitutional right to clean air and pure water, but far too many communities here in Pennsylvania suffer from old and outdated lead pipes that endanger the health of our children and families,” said Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro. “My Administration is ready to work with President Biden, Vice President Harris, and our federal partners to make life-saving investments that will deliver clean drinking water to families across the Commonwealth, especially in communities that have been left behind for too long. Working with our federal partners, we can rebuild our infrastructure, create good-paying jobs, and guarantee that constitutional right holds for all Pennsylvania, regardless of their zip code.”

“Every Wisconsinite deserves access to safe, clean

drinking water. We’ve been working to address the lead crisis and other water quality issues affecting our state since Day One of my administration—from declaring 2019 the Year of Clean Drinking Water to our ongoing work with the EPA to replace lead service lines across our state,” said Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers. “The Biden Administration and the EPA have been critical partners in these efforts. I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure Wisconsinites can trust the water coming from their taps.”

The LSLR Accelerators initiative represents another step forward by the Biden-Harris Administration to achieve 100% lead free water systems. President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invested an unprecedented \$50 billion in the nation’s water and wastewater infrastructure, including \$15 billion dedicated to lead service line replacement and \$11.7 billion of general Drinking Water State Revolving Funds that can also be used for lead service line replacement. And in 2021, with the boost from these water infrastructure investments, the Biden-Harris Administration released its [Lead Pipe and Paint Action Plan](#). EPA is committed to this work and using every tool available—statutory authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act, technical assistance, funding for lead service line replacement, and more—to protect all Americans from lead in drinking water.

With the help of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, EPA is strengthening its technical assistance efforts in order to ensure every community gets its fair share of this historic investment. [Learn more about water technical assistance for communities and the Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerators.](#)

### **Background**

All communities deserve access to safe, clean, lead-free water. Yet too many families and children across America are still impacted by lead pipes. The science is clear that lead pipes pose serious health risks, particularly for children. However, many communities, particularly underserved communities and communities in rural and inner urban areas, lack necessary tools and resources to make rapid progress on lead service line replacement.

The primary source of lead in drinking water, when present, is pipes. Lead can be harmful to human

health even at low exposure levels and can accumulate in the body over time. In children, low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.

## Upcoming Meetings and Webinars

WestFAST Webinar: An Introduction to Pumped Storage Hydropower

February 14, 2023, 10:00 am – 11:00 am MT

WSWC 2023 Spring (201st) Meetings

May 22-24, 2023, Reno, Nevada

## Other Federal News

EPA 1/19/2023. EPA Announces Availability of \$50 Million to Support States and Tribes Developing Programs for Carbon Sequestration and Groundwater Protection

EPA 1/10/2023. Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of \$100 Million through Inflation Reduction Act for Environmental Justice Grants

EPA 1/20/2023. Announces Plans for Wastewater Regulations and Studies, Including Limits for PFAS, New Study for Nutrients

FWS 1/10/2023. A big step to recover a tiny California fish

FWS 1/26/2023. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: 2022 Annual Report

NASA 1/12/2023. NASA Says 2022 Fifth Warmest Year on Record, Warming Trend Continues

NRCS 1/9/2023. USDA Offers Contract Opportunities for Small Architectural and Engineering Firms

NOAA 1/9/2023. Climate attribution tools critical for understanding extreme events

NOAA 1/25/2023. Sea Grant and U.S. Coastal Research Program invest in strengthening resilient coastal communities

Reclamation 1/5/2023. Biden-Harris Administration invests \$7 million in 82 projects to improve water efficiency

USACE 1/ 23/2023. Structural Health Monitoring key to a more resilient, modern infrastructure network

USACE 1/ 23/2023. Remote sensing gives USACE an edge at detecting harmful algal blooms

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 13 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.