

## **COALITION SUPPORTING USGS STREAMGAGE NETWORKS & MODERNIZATION**

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chairman  
Senator Tom Udall, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
**Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2021**

March 25, 2020

**Summary of Coalition's Requested increases for FY21:**  
**Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M**  
**Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M**  
**NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M**

Dear Senator Murkowski and Senator Udall:

As leaders in the undersigned organizations, we urge your support to enable the US Geological Survey (USGS), a Bureau in the Department of Interior (DOI), to fully support its streamgaging networks. These vital networks, managed within the USGS Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, provide critical and life-saving information and serve the national interest with continuous streamflow information at over 8,400 locations. Additions to these networks are needed to adequately manage the Nation's critical water supplies and infrastructure. The members of our organizations rely on the streamgage data and science that USGS produces and many of us represent active, cost-share partners in funding the data collection that Congress and the federal agencies require.

Information from these valuable streamgages are utilized by emergency responders, water supply managers, water quality administrators, recreationists, consulting engineers, and many others in forecasting and response during floods, droughts, and other extreme events, design of bridges and other infrastructure, energy generation, management of federal lands, design and operation of federal reservoirs and navigation infrastructure. These networks provide critical information to other bureaus of the DOI and to the U.S. Corps of Engineers, NOAA, EPA, USDA, and other federal agencies, as well as providing information essential to Congressional oversight and revision of many federal laws, including the Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and many interstate compacts and international treaties.

**Federal Priority Streamgage (FPS) Network** (formerly referred to as the National Streamflow Information Program, "NSIP"): was authorized by Congress in 2009, to operate and maintain a stable "federal backbone" network of streamgages to meet five specific national needs for streamflow information at (1) interstate and international boundaries, (2) National Weather Service flood forecast sites, (3) outflows of major river basins, (4) "sentinel watersheds," needed to evaluate and anticipate the potential consequences of ongoing changes in American land use, water use, climate etc., and (5) national priority water-quality monitoring sites. Our national ability to collect sufficient water data at the needed locations to answer the necessary federal, state, tribal, local, business and NGO questions is seriously compromised by the insufficient funding for the FPS Network. As funding for this network

has been flat for the past 5 years, USGS will be forced to reduce, rather than increase, the gages supported by the FPS Network. Also, contemporary water management issues such as ecological flows were not considered when the original national criteria were developed for the Network. Additional funding would begin to meet these needs. Today, only 25 % of the Federal Priority Streamgages are fully funded by the federal government. The USGS is unable to complete development of the Network, as Congress directed in 2009, without additional funding. Full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network is estimated at \$125M. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M for FY21 to begin to address the critical funding shortfall for the FPS network.**

**Cooperative Matching Funds:** The USGS works with over a thousand partners nation-wide (federal, state, tribal, local, and NGO) using Cooperative Matching Funds to jointly support USGS streamgages, many of which meet the criteria of the FPS Network. This matching program, which began as a 50-50 program, has seen the federal cost-share contribution decrease from 50 % to less than 30 %. Given the ability for this program to enable and encourage the expansion of vitally needed streamgages on a two for one (or greater) cost basis, an increase over the FY20 level of \$29.6 M will allow for an expansion beyond the 5,345 streamgages currently covered under this program. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M for FY21.**

**Related Programs within the USGS Water Mission Area-- Next Generation Water Observation System (NGWOS) and Modernization of the Networks and Data Delivery:** Our coalition very much appreciates Congress' recent support of NGWOS and modernization efforts. Build-out of this innovative program will provide focused monitoring in ten basins nationwide to better calibrate modeling, thus improving the ability to estimate water supply in the nation's many ungaged areas. Additional gaging stations added in the NGWOS basins supports the goals of increasing gages nationwide under the FPS Network and through Cooperative Matching Funds. We are supportive of the modeling and predictive analytical work being developed by the USGS. A robust network of physical gages is crucial to the calibration of many models (including NOAA's National Water Model and those developed by others); however, this coalition's primary support remains directed toward adequately supporting, invigorating and expanding the real-time stream gages across the U.S. **Requested Funding Level for NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M to enable a third pilot basin to be identified and funded and to allow USGS to continue to modernize water data delivery systems that benefit all water users across the nation.**

With your help and continued support, Congress can enable the USGS to fulfill its Water Resources Mission Area goals, including working toward full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network, adequately funding the Cooperative Matching Funds for streamgaging and moving water science into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through much needed modernization upgrades.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Sue Lowry at the Interstate Council on Water Policy ([Sue@ICWP.org](mailto:Sue@ICWP.org) or 307-630-5804).

Coalition of stakeholders concerned with federal support for fundamental water data collection:

| <u>Organization</u>                                  | <u>Signor</u>           | <u>Title</u>               |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| American Society of Civil Engineers                  | Thomas W. Smith         | Secretary & Exec. Dir.     |
| American Water Resources Association                 | Dresden Farrand         | Executive VP/CEO           |
| American Water Works Association                     | Tracy Mehan             | Exec. Dir./Gov't Affairs   |
| American Whitewater                                  | Mark Singleton          | Executive Director         |
| Appalachian Mountain Club                            | Susan Arnold            | VP for Conservation        |
| Association of American State Geologists             | Rich Ort                | President                  |
| Association of California Water Agencies             | David Reynolds          | Director/Federal Relations |
| Association of Clean Water Administrators            | Melanie Davenport       | ACWA President             |
| Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies              | Jennifer Mock Schaeffer | Gov't Affairs Director     |
| Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies           | Diane VanDe Hei         | CEO                        |
| Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Inc.      | Lori C. Spragens        | Executive Director         |
| Association of State Floodplain Managers             | Chad Berginnis          | Executive Director         |
| Bear River Commission                                | Don A. Barnett          | Engineer-Manager           |
| California Sportfishing Protection Alliance          | Bill Jennings           | Executive Director         |
| Cascade Water Alliance                               | Ray Hoffman             | CEO                        |
| CDM-Smith  | Timothy D. Feather      | Vice President             |
| Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority                 | Glenn M. Page           | General Manager            |
| Colorado River Salinity Control Forum                | Don A. Barnett          | Executive Director         |
| Delaware River Basin Commission                      | Steven J. Tambini       | Executive Director         |
| Henry's Fork Foundation                              | Brandon Hoffner         | Executive Director         |
| Idaho Rivers United                                  | Nic Nelson              | Executive Director         |
| Idaho Water Users Association                        | Paul L. Arrington       | Executive Director         |
| Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin     | Michael Nardolilli      | Executive Director         |
| Interstate Council on Water Policy                   | Amy Shallcross          | ICWP Chair                 |
| Kansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Comm.         | Earnie Gilder           | Federal Chair              |
| KISTERS North America, Inc.                          | Becca Emery             | Business Develop. Mngr.    |
| Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District   | Katherine Zitsch        | Director                   |
| Montana DNRC   | John E. Tubbs           | Director                   |
| Nat'l. Assoc. Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies | Susan Gilson            | Executive Director         |
| National Drought Mitigation Center                   | Dr. Mark Svoboda        | Director                   |
| National Hydrologic Warning Council                  | Bruce Rindahl           | President                  |
| National Hydropower Association                      | Malcolm Woolf           | President and CEO          |
| National Society of Professional Surveyors           | Curtis Sumner           | Executive Director         |
| National Water Resources Association                 | Ian Lyle                | Executive Vice President   |
| National Water Supply Alliance                       | Dave Mitamura           | Executive Director         |
| National Wildlife Federation                         | Melissa Samet           | Sr. Water Res. Counsel     |
| Nebraska DNR   | Jesse Bradley           | Interim Director           |
| New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Comm. | Susan J. Sullivan       | Executive Director         |
| Ohio R. Valley Water Sanitation Commission           | Richard Harrison        | Executive Director         |
| Oklahoma Water Resources Board                       | Julie Cunningham        | Executive Director         |
| Oregon Water Resources Congress                      | April Snell             | Executive Director         |
| Red River Compact Commission                         | Sue Lowry               | Federal Chairman           |
| Republican River Compact Commission                  | Jesse Bradley           | Nebraska Commissioner      |
| Rivers Alliance of Connecticut                       | Alicea Charamut         | Executive Director         |
| Susquehanna River Basin Commission                   | Drew Dehoff             | Executive Director         |
| The Nature Conservancy                               | Jimmy Hague             | Sr. Water Policy Adv       |
| Tri-State Water Resource Coalition                   | Gail Melgren            | Executive Director         |
| Trout Unlimited                                      | Steve Moyer             | VP/Gov't Affairs           |
| Upper Colorado River Commission                      | Amy Haas                | Exec. Director/Secretary   |

| <u>Organization</u>                       | <u>Signor</u>     | <u>Title</u>         |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| Upper Mississippi River Basin Association | Kirsten Wallace   | Executive Director   |
| Water Environment Federation              | Walter Marlowe    | Executive Director   |
| West Virginia Rivers Coalition            | Angie Rosser      | Executive Director   |
| Western Landowners Alliance               | Lesli Allison     | Executive Director   |
| Western States Water Council              | Tony Willardson   | Executive Director   |
| Wyoming Water Association                 | Cory Toye         | President            |
| Xylem Analytics                           | Timothy A. Grooms | Marketing Director   |
| Yellowstone River Compact Commission      | Jan Langel        | Montana Commissioner |

Copy: Appropriations Subcommittee Members  
Secretary of the Interior  
Director, OMB  
Director, USGS