

# 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-2020**

March 29, 2019

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, serve the national interest with continuous streamflow information at over 8,200 locations. But 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 water supply managers, water quality administrators, emergency responders, consulting engineers, recreationists 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 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, Endangered Species Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, and many interstate compacts and international treaties.

**Federal Priority Streamgage 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 Federal Priority Streamgage Network.

Today, less than 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 FY20.**

**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 Federal Priority network. This matching program, which began as a 50-50 program, has seen the non-federal cost-share contribution increase from 50% to over 70%. Restoring this program to a 50-50% cost share is estimated to require \$70M. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M for FY20.**

**Modernization of the Networks and Data Delivery:** Much of the basic operations of the streamgaging networks is based on technology that is seven or eight decades old. Innovations are necessary to enable scarce dollars to effectively measure, monitor, and understand the nation's water resources. The Next Generation (NextGen) Water Observation System exemplifies innovative data collection equipment and data delivery and

the potential to support water prediction and decision-support systems for emergencies and daily water operations.

**Next Generation Water Observation System:** Our coalition very much appreciates Congress' support of this innovative program. Build-out of NextGen envisions focused monitoring in 10 basins nationwide to better calibrate modeling, thus improving the ability to estimate water supply in the nation's many ungaged areas. The Delaware River basin was selected as the pilot basin, first of the 10 envisioned. The USGS's 10-year plan for implementation of Next Gen calls for \$7.8M/year in order to equip one additional basin per year. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for NextGen Equipment for Implementation is \$7.8 M and for Operation and Maintenance is \$4.5 M for FY20.**

To fully capitalize on the robust data collected in the NextGen basins, modernization of data delivery is also required. Aging legacy software systems with a growing maintenance burden need to be updated to a robust and scalable IT water infrastructure that positions us for the future. This transformation is needed to enable management of new data and sensor networks, support integration of the best water data available from across multiple agencies and sectors, feed data and analytical products forward into the National Water Model, and ultimately provide feedback to optimize and evolve the system. The new system must deliver data and advanced model results through innovative online tools to meet the nation's water challenges over the coming decades. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Modernization of USGS Data Management, Integration and Delivery Infrastructure is \$9.0 M for FY20.**

With your help, we hope that Congress will enable the USGS to fulfill its Water Resources Mission Area, including working toward full implementation of the Federal Priority 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@gmail.com](mailto:Sue.ICWP@gmail.com) or 307-630-5804).

Sincerely,



Wade Blackwood, Executive Director  
American Canoe Association



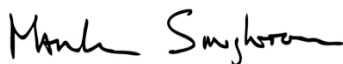
Thomas W. Smith III, Executive Director  
American Society of Civil Engineers



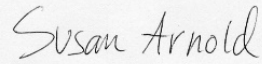
Dresden Farrand, Executive VP/CEO  
American Water Resources Association



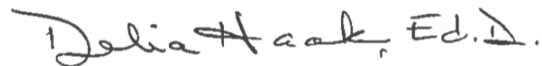
G. Tracy Mehan, III, Exec Director, Government Affairs  
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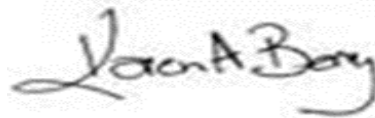
Mark Singleton, Executive Director  
American Whitewater



Susan Arnold, VP for Conservation  
Appalachian Mountain Club



Delia Haak, Federal Commissioner and Chairman  
Arkansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission



Karen Berry, President  
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Julia Anastasio, Executive Director & General Counsel  
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Adam Krantz, Chief Executive Officer  
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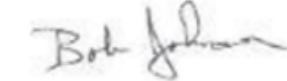
Susan Gilson, Executive Director  
**National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies**


John C. Fetterman, Deputy Executive Director  
**National Association of State Boating Law Administrators**

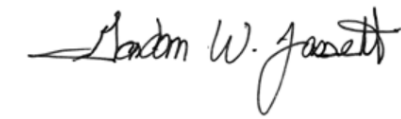
Steve Fitzgerald, President  
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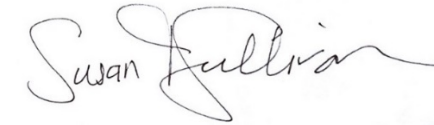
  
Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director  
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Bob Johnson, Executive Director  
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Gordon W. Fassett, Director  
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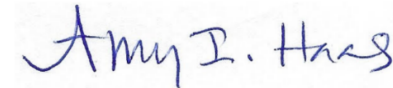
  
April Snell, Executive Director  
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Sue Lowry, Federal Commissioner and Chair  
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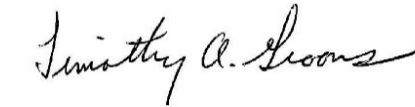
  
Chris Wood, President & CEO  
**Trout Unlimited**

  
Gail Melgren, Executive Director  
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Andrew Dehoff, Executive Director  
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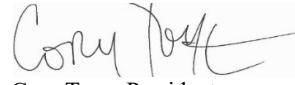
  
Amy Haas, Executive Director  
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Kirsten Wallace, Executive Director  
**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

  
Tim Grooms, Marketing Director  
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Eileen J. O'Neill, Executive Director  
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Patrick T. Tyrell, Wyoming  
**Yellowstone River Compact Commission**

Copy: Appropriations Subcommittee Members  
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Director, USGS