

## **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 Ortt	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