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March 11, 2021

The Honorable John Barrasso
United States Senate

Delivered via email

Dear Senator Barrasso:

On behalf of the Interstate Council on Water Policy, a nationwide organization of state, interstate and regional water managers, and the Wyoming State Engineer's Office as one of our members, we are writing to request your support for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fiscal Year 2022 appropriation to begin the western pilot for improving sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) precipitation forecasting recommended in NOAA's 2020 report to Congress under Public Law 115-25. (<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/27408>)

The purpose of the pilot project is to improve precipitation forecasting for water management. As the report notes, NOAA pilot projects were chosen "...based on the existence of major climate phenomena that have huge economic impacts and for which current S2S predictive skill is too low to be effectively used by many stakeholders." Forecasts at S2S time scales (weeks to a year or more) are needed to support water project operations, drought preparedness and response, and innovative water management strategies such as forecast-informed reservoir operations.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has been issuing S2S precipitation outlooks since the mid-1990s. Their skill for the western U.S. has been minimal, just slightly better than predicting average weather conditions, and has shown little improvement over time. Forecasting precipitation at S2S timescales is scientifically challenging and has historically received little federal research support.

We request your support for a \$15 million increase in the U.S. Weather Research Program line item within NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research appropriations account. (In fiscal year 2021 this line item was budgeted at \$26.5 million.) Attached is proposed committee report language describing how the \$15 million should be focused.

We appreciate your consideration and hope you will include S2S pilot project funding in your appropriations requests. Please feel free to contact us (sue@ICWP.org or steve.wolff@wyo.gov) with any questions. Further, we would welcome an opportunity to meet virtually and discuss this project with your staff.

With best regards,

Sue Lowry
ICWP Executive Director

Steve Wolff, Administrator
Wyoming State Engineer's Office