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Statement 2024-03-L&P

ICWP Principle Statement on U.S. Geological Survey Streamgaging Program

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Statement of the Issue:

Continuous and adequate investment by our federal government nationwide is critical to water resources management, national security, and the socioeconomic well-being of our nation. This information is critical for determining the amounts of water available for uses including the capacity to accurately forecast and respond to extreme drought, flood and icing cycle events and for infrastructure planning, development and maintenance. The Federal Priority Streamgaging (FPS) Network operates and maintains a stable “federal backbone” network of streamgages to provide streamflow information at interstate and international boundaries, National Weather Service flood forecast sites, outflows of major river basins, “sentinel watersheds,” and national priority water-quality monitoring sites. Insufficient appropriations preclude the Network’s development, limiting our knowledge of important water resource information and trends.

The FPS program works in concert with the Cooperative Matching Funds (CMF) program of the USGS to assure geographic coverage of streamgages across the US. However, these matching funds have become relied upon too heavily to support the FPS. Given impending budget reductions in states and with cooperators the appropriation and budget request need to at least match (50% appropriation/50% cooperators). In FY2019, the USGS estimated \$70 Million would be necessary to bring the cost share match back to 50-50% for all streamgages supported with CMF dollars.

Why Important to ICWP membership:

ICWP member organizations and many other water stakeholders rely on USGS’s streamgaging data and science for forecasting and response during floods, droughts, and other extreme events which impact infrastructure and national security. The knowledge resulting from the gages informs the designs of bridges, reservoirs, and navigation and other infrastructure, strengthening their performance and longevity as well as for enhancing energy generation and land management. Information from streamgages are utilized by water supply managers, water quality administrators, emergency responders, consulting engineers, recreationists, and many others. Because of the tremendous value

provided by the streamgaging network, many ICWP members serve as active, cost-share partners in funding data collection.

ICWP Recommended Action/Position:

- ICWP supports the continuation of the federal-state partnership to realize the Congressionally-directed mandate to execute the Federal Priority Streamgaging Network, which is estimated to cost \$125 million. Current federal appropriations fall far short of this full program number, currently at about \$25M.
- ICWP will request that the Executive Branch budget for, and Congress appropriate, a robust implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgaging Network, and advocate for full funding as originally intended in the SECURE Water Act. Funding for the FPS network would support key activities of the program, including:
 - Installation and maintenance of the priority streamgages
 - Cooperative Matching Funds to support partnerships with states, tribal, local, and nonprofit entities to build the streamgaging network
 - The Next Generation (NextGen) Water Observation System to modernize the basic operations of streamgaging network, including developing innovative data collection equipment and delivery mechanisms
- ICWP will continue to work with their stakeholder partners to deliver our fiscal year appropriations request to Congress each March for each of these important components to the streamgaging network.