

USGS STREAMGAGE FUNDING

The SECURE Water Act of 2009 authorized implementation of not less than 4,700 streamgage sites funded by the national streamflow information program. The total cost of a fully implemented network would have required \$130M initially and \$80M for ongoing operations and maintenance. To-date, Congressional streamgage funding priorities have not lined up to meet this goal. The USGS is unable to complete its development for a fully implemented network as directed by Congress in 2009 without additional funding.

WHY ARE FEDERAL PRIORITY STREAMGAGE (FPS) GAGE DATA IMPORTANT?

Authorized by Congress in the SECURE Water Act as the National Streamflow Information Program, the FPS is meant to comprise a stable “federal backbone” network of streamgages. Data provided by FPS inform critical life and property saving information. They augment research management decisions, maintain water dependent infrastructure and provide essential public health and environmental condition information. Insufficient funding seriously compromises our national ability to address federal, state, tribal, local socioeconomic issues, including international treaty obligations.



WHO USES THE DATA AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

The utility of the network is not singular to USGS. The vital data provided by the streamgages support critical water management activities across the nation by carrying out the mission and operations of federal agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA, FEMA, EPA, USDA, Department of Interior, NASA, Department of Defense, Homeland Security, and others. External stakeholders rely on these streamgaging networks to ensure our national ability to address critical environmental and socio-economic issues.



WHY IS THERE A CURRENT FPS FUNDING SHORTFALL?

Historically, FPS cost increases have previously been covered by USGS partners, including state and other federal agencies (where gages are jointly funded) or by delaying planned network enhancements. Enhancements include, but are not limited to, cyclical upgrades to equipment and activities to flood-harden existing FPS sites. Unfortunately, after multiple years of flat funding, the USGS reached a breaking point where network enhancements could no longer be delayed and operational costs continue to increase. Operations at some streamgages have already been discontinued and more shutdowns will continue unless funding shortages are addressed resulting in losses to long-term data that cannot be re-created.



ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

USGS List of Threatened Gages: <https://water.usgs.gov/networks/fundingstability/>

National Water Dashboard/Map of USGS Streamgages:
<https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/?aoi=default>

U.S. Geological Survey Streamgaging Network: Overview and Issues for Congress:
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45695>

Coverage, Resolution, and Representation of Public Interests by the USGS Streamflow Monitoring Network:
https://wa.water.usgs.gov/projects/NetworkAnalysis/NetworkAnalysis_index.html

Statement by Michael Connor, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner before the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power on the implementation of the SECURE Water Act - March 16, 2010: https://www.doi.gov/oc/hearings/111/SECUREWaterAct_031610

