Coalition Support for USGS Streamgage Networks

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chair
Senator Merkley, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 27, 2025

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

Our coalition of 105 water management and use stakeholders requests your support to sufficiently fund the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) Federal Priorities Streamgage (FPS) network and Cooperative Matching Funds (CMF) program for the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget appropriation.

Our organizations rely heavily upon the information provided by these streamgages to make critical decisions about public safety, respond to extreme weather events, forecast and maintain water supplies, and support the nation's economy. **Any further funding shortfalls will greatly impact our ability to protect public safety, support infrastructure and plan for and respond to extreme weather events**.

Our request:

1. Congress must ensure that funding is increased from FY2024 levels to support the USGS FPS network of over 3,400 streamgage sites across the country.
2. Doing so will pace with inflation so that the network continues to be available.
3. Augmenting funding for CMF is also critical to support streamgage sites and operate in collaboration with over 1,500 partners nationwide.

For FY2026, Congress must appropriate: 1) $33M for Federal Priority Streamgage network ($7.3M above FY2024) to halt funding shortfalls that are leading to the elimination of critical streamgages and that support our national interest; and **2) $33M for the Cooperative Matching Funds program** ($2.5M above FY2024) to support funding agreements that enable cost sharing of streamgages and data collection.

The problem:

Federal Priority Streamgages – After multiple years of flat funding and rising costs to operate the network, many FPS sites across the country have been discontinued. In 2024 alone, 17 sites were discontinued. Over the last four years these inflationary costs have skyrocketed and 35 streamgages have been lost.

Congress originally intended that the USGS FPS network comprise a stable "federal backbone" network of streamgages (see SECURE Water Act of 2009 Title IX, Subtitle F of P.L. 111-11). The lack of federal funding for FPS sites increasingly places the burden on state, regional and local entities to assume the costs for maintenance and operation. As more states and local communities find it increasingly difficult to make up for the gap and assume, or even share, streamgage costs due to their own local economic pressures, we are seeing an increased rate of loss of sites and long-term data that cannot be re-created.

Moreover, USGS recently completed a process of engaging Federal stakeholders through surveys and listening sessions on current water data needs and to see if the FPS network still meets its intended purposes. Results of the feedback show that the number of FPS locations that meet updated eligibility criteria nearly tripled, further underscoring the value of and critical need for the FPS network.

Cooperative Matching Funds – CMF funds support streamgages with state, regional, tribal and local partners to provide reliable, impartial, and timely data needed to understand and manage the Nation's water resources. In Fiscal Years 2022-24, appropriated funds for CMF remained virtually stagnant while the reliance on non-appropriated FPS funding increased by almost 10 percent. This shift in funding places even more pressure on struggling state and local communities to fill in the gap to keep streamgage sites operating.

What happens if Congress does not appropriate FPS and CMF funds as requested?

1. *Critical infrastructure is more likely to fail*

FPS streamgage networks are integral to the planning, design, and construction of critical infrastructure such as bridges, culverts, water treatment plants and hydroelectric dams. They provide information about real-time streamflow to ensure their ability to withstand changing conditions and to safely operate during extreme weather events.

When FPS sites are discontinued, less information is available to support critical infrastructure, resulting in increased costs and operational failure.

2. *Life and property are more at risk*

FPS streamgage data also help decisionmakers prepare for and respond to extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts and hurricanes. The loss of streamflow monitoring sites reduces our ability to make informed decisions pertaining to navigation, flood and hurricane risk predictions, drought determinations, and water supply forecasts.

Conclusion

With your help and continued support, Congress can enable the USGS to fulfill its Water Resources Mission Area goals by adequately funding the Federal Priority Streamgages network and Cooperative Matching Funds program as requested above.

We are happy to answer your questions. For more background information about funding and the utility of the national streamflow information program from stakeholders' perspectives, visit ICWP's website: https://icwp.org/streamgage-support/.

Please contact any of us or Beth Callaway at the Interstate Council on Water Policy at: beth@icwp.org or (307) 772-1999.

CC:
Appropriations Subcommittee Members
Secretary of the Interior
Director, Office of Management and Budget
Director, US Geological Survey

Co-Signing Organizations

Organization	Name
Alabama Office of Water Resources	Tom Littlepage
American Fisheries Society	Jeff Kopaska
American Flood Coalition Action	Jared M. Melville
American Flood Coalition Action	Julie Seger
American Rivers	Leda Huta
American Rivers	Ted Illston
American Society of Civil Engineers	Thomas W Smith
American Water Resources Assn.	Dresden Farrand
American Water Works Assn.	G. Tracy Mehan, III Ed, Gov't Affairs
American Whitewater	Mark Singleton, ED
America's Watershed Initiative	Kimberly A. Lutz
Appalachian Mountain Club	Susan Arnold
Assoc of American State Geologists	Jessica Moore
Assoc of Calif Water Agencies	Ian Lyle
Assoc of Clean Water Administrators	Adrian Stocks, ACWA President, WDNR
Assoc of Fish & Wildlife Agencies	Kurt Thiede
Assoc of State Dam Safety Officials	Lori Spragens
Assoc of State Flood Plain Managers	Chad Berginnis
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies	Tom Dobbins
Bear River Commission	Don Barnett
Big Hole Watershed Committee	Pedro Marques
Big Horn River Alliance	Anne Marie Emery
Calif Sportfishing Protection Alliance	Bill Jennings
Cascade Water Alliance	Ray Hoffman
CDM Smith	Timothy Feather
Cobb County Marietta Water Authority	Cole Blackwell
Colo Riv Basin Salinity Control Forum	Don Barnett
Colorado Lake & Reservoir Management Assn.	Suresh Niraula
Delaware River Basin Commission	Steve Tambini
Environmental Defense Fund	Steve Cochran
Fly Fishers International	Patrick Berry
Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society	Steve McMurray
Great Lakes Commission	Erika Jensen
Great Lakes Observing System	Kelli Paige
Hawaii Commission on Water Resource Management	Kaleo Manuel

Henry's Fork Foundation	Brandon Hoffner
Hoopa Tribal Land Management/Environmental Protection Agency	Ken Norton
Hydrological Services America	Peter Ward
Hydropower Reform Coalition	Nic Nelson
Idaho Rivers United	Greg McReynolds
Idaho Water Users Assoc	Paul Arrington
Interstate Comm Potomac River Basin	Michael Nardolilli
Interstate Council on Water Policy	Matt Unruh
Kansas Water Office	Connie Owen
Kansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Commission	Earnie Gilder
KISTERS No. America	Becca Emery
Madison River Foundation	Johnathan Malovich
Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Katherine Zitsch
Mile High Flood District	Colin Haggerty
Minnesota DNR	Katie Smith
Missouri DNR	Erin Fanning
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	Lindsey Krywaruchka
Montana DNRC	Anna Pakenham-Stevenson
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	Bill Schenk
Montana Trout Unlimited	David Brooks
Montana Watershed Coordination Council	Ethan Kunard
National Assoc of Flood & Stormwater Mgm't Agencies	Sunny Simpkins
National Assoc of Wetland Managers	Marla Stelk
National Assoc State Boating Law Admin	John Fetterman
National Audubon Society	Julie Hill-Gabriel
National Drought Mitigation Center	Mark Svoboda
National Ground Water Association	Terry Morse
National Hydrologic Warning Council	Bruce Rindahl
National Hydropower Association	Malcolm Woolf
National Society of Professional Surveyors	Tim Burch
National Water Resources Association	Greg Morrison
National Water Supply Alliance	Dave Mitamura
National Wildlife Federation	Abby Tinsley
Nebraska DNR	Thomas Riley
NEIWPCC	Susan Sullivan
North American Lake Management Society	Kellie Merrell

North Dakota Department of Water Resources	Andrea Travnicek
Ohio Riv Valley Water Sanitation Comm	Richard Harrison
Oklahoma Water Resources Board	Julie Cunningham
Oregon Water Resources Congress	April Snell
Phycological Society of America	Eric Linton
Red River Compact Administration	Sue Lowry
Republican Riv Compact Administration	Thomas Riley
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut	Alicea Charamut
Society of Wetland Scientists	Loretta Battaglia
Southest Kansas Groundwater Management Dist 3	Mark Rude
Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission	Adam Ringia
Susquehanna River Basin Commission	Andrew Dehoff
Tacoma Water	Scott Dewhirst
The Nature Conservancy	Elizabeth Crow
Three Rivers QUEST	Melissa O'Neal
Tri-State Water Resource Coalition	Gail Melgren
Trout Unlimited	Kate Miller
University of Georgia River Basin Center	Sechindra Vallury/ Seth Wenger
Upper Colo River Commission	Chuck Collum
Upper Miss River Basin Assoc	Kirsten Wallace
Upper Missouri Watershed Alliance	Sherry Meador
Va. Dept. of Environmental Quality, Office of Water Supply	William Cloe
Washington St Water Resource Assoc	Tom Myrum
Water Environment Federation	Walter Marlowe
West Virginia Rivers Coalition	Angie Rosser
West Virginia Water Research Institute	Paul Ziemkiewicz
Western Landowners Alliance	Leslie Allison
Western States Water Council	Tony Willardson
Wild Salmon Center	Jessica Helsley
Wyoming State Engineer's Office	Brandon Gebhart
Wyoming Water Association	Andrew Strike
Wyoming Water Development Office	Jason Mead
Xylem Analytics North America	Randy Hadland
Yellowstone River Commission	Brandon Gebhart