

Coalition Support for NOAA/National Weather Service Office of Water Prediction

March 26, 2025

Senator Jerry Moran, Chair
Senator Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
H310 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

Our coalition of water management, infrastructure and transportation stakeholders rely upon and work closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Water Prediction (OWP) within the National Weather Service (NWS) to utilize the agency's cutting-edge work on precipitation forecasts, hydrologic modeling, and hurricane forecasting. **We urge your continued support for the NWS Office of Water Prediction amid the disruptions caused by the large-scale restructuring efforts currently underway.**

We respectfully request that Congress maintain baseline funding for the National Weather Service, specifically providing for the Office of Water Prediction at no less than the FY2023 enacted level of \$38.5 million as part of the NWS Operations, Research, and Facilities program. Doing so will safeguard the OWP's crucial functions that **protect life, ensure public safety, and underpin our economy.**

Why are the Office of Water Prediction's key functions so important?

In partnership with NWS, the OWP coordinates, integrates and supports consistent water prediction activities at the 13 NWS River Forecast Centers (RFCs) across the country. RFCs provide information that facilitate decision making associated with water supply planning and events including:

- Flash floods
- Drought
- Emergency management
- Agriculture
- Hydroelectric dam operation
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Water resources management, and more.

How do we use Office of Water Prediction products?

Stakeholders rely on the hydrologic information provided by OWP functions to:

- Forecast floods and their potential impact

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- Provide critical information for emergency response services
- Predict drought risk, including magnitude and uncertainty
- Operate infrastructure more efficiently
- Predict water supply availability
- Disseminate reservoir operational guidance
- Help communities nationwide become more resilient when planning and designing new infrastructure.

What are the Office of Water Prediction's key functions that we rely upon?

National Water Prediction Service -- The National Water Prediction Service is the one-stop shop for critical NWS water resources information including river observations, forecasts, site data, and data services. The information it supplies includes river stage observations and forecasts that display the magnitude and uncertainty of occurrence of floods or drought.

National Water Model -- The National Water Model provides key nationwide hydrologic guidance, such as timing and probability of high flows and flood inundation mapping. It provides actionable, neighborhood-level intelligence on current and impending floods to inform emergency management decisions.

River Forecast Centers -- The National Weather Service's thirteen forecast centers nationwide complement and verify results from the National Water Model on a local and regional scale (in real-time and an ongoing basis), issue flood warnings within their service areas, and establish localized flood impact assessments.

Atlas 15 -- NOAA's Atlas 15 is a cutting-edge enhancement of precipitation frequency estimates that will provide expected precipitation for a specified storm duration at a particular location of interest.

What can Congress do to protect the Office of Water Prediction's key functions?

Even a small reduction in the amount or quality of services that the OWP provides is damaging to the accuracy of water information, forecasts and warnings. NOAA and NWS must be able to continue to provide this information pursuant to NOAA's public safety mission and responsibility for ensuring economic vitality. **Please retain the NWS Office of Water Prediction funding at no less than the FY2023 enacted level of \$38.5 million for FY2026.**

Thank you for your consideration of the critical nature of NOAA's National Weather Service Office of Water Prediction as Congress works on its priorities for Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact any of us or Interstate Council on Water Policy Executive Director Beth Callaway at: beth@icwp.org or 307-772-1999.

Respectfully,

American Flood Coalition Action
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Interstate Council on Water Policy
National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies

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National Hydropower Association
National Hydrologic Warning Council
National Water Resources Association
National Water Supply Alliance
The American Waterways Operators

CC:

Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Coast Guard, Maritime and Fisheries