

COALITION SUPPORTING THE USGS NATIONAL STREAMGAGE MONITORING NETWORK

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chairman
Senator Tom Udall, Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

June 9, 2015

Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING

Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2016

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As leaders in the undersigned organizations, we urge your support to enable the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to fully implement its design for the **National Streamgauge Monitoring Network**, which includes the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and the Cooperative Water Program (CWP).

The members of our organizations rely on the water data and science that the USGS produces and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the USGS Cooperative Water Program. America’s need to understand and anticipate streamflow, groundwater levels, tidal surge, precipitation and water quality changes is increasing every year in relation to our planning public safety, land use and economic development; and our infrastructure planning and ecological commitments magnify those needs. Unfortunately, the federal funds appropriated to Interior/USGS for the National Streamgauge Monitoring Network have not kept up with this Nation’s need (or with the approximately \$85 million contributed by over 800 non-federal Cooperators).

The USGS National Streamgauge Monitoring Network, approximately 8,100 streamgages, serves the federal need and provides the national benchmark for an integrated monitoring network and a proven source of reliable scientific information that we all need to support well-informed decision making in the public and private sectors across a wide variety of water resource planning, design and operational functions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams, levees, and other infrastructure;
- forecasting storm surge, flood and drought conditions and issuing emergency advisories;
- identifying flood-prone areas to protect lives and property and reduce disaster relief expenses;
- protecting water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for water supply, irrigation, hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing safety information for boating and other water-based recreation;
- analyzing climate trends and evaluating community and regional response options; and
- projecting future water needs and availability for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses.

Concern for the long-term continuity and reliability of our national streamgaging data led the Congress to ask USGS for a solution in 1998. The NSIP was designed by USGS and authorized by Congress in 2009 to operate as a federally-funded “backbone” for the National Streamgauge Network necessary to fulfill 5 specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.”

Unfortunately, about 25% of the NSIP gages are still not active due to insufficient federal funding. In 2014, the highest-priority streamgages were funded by the NSIP, the CWP, and USGS partners; 976 of these streamgages were fully funded by the USGS (through NSIP), increasing the number of USGS fully funded streamgages by 182 due to the \$6M increase that Congress appropriated for expansion of the National Streamgauge Network.

Even with that \$6M and the \$1.2M that Congress added for FY-2015, 70% of the active NSIP streamgages still rely upon a patchwork of funding, a significant portion of which comes from non-federal agencies.

The National Streamgage Monitoring Network has served America well for 120 years, and the cost-share partnership with state, tribal, interstate and local agencies supports the full network for surface water monitoring that Congress and the federal agencies need to inform their decisions. Currently, USGS can support only about 1/3 of the cost-shared component of the Streamgage Network and interpretive studies, compared with 50% in the past. This shifts more of the financial burden for the National Streamgage Monitoring Network onto the state, tribal and local cost-share partners. As a result, the continuity of this national science function is still vulnerable and cannot be considered reliable to meet federal and other national needs.

While we acknowledge that the federal budget needs to adapt to economic concerns, the repeated cost of storm, flooding and drought impacts make reliable data and science more essential than ever in protecting our communities, businesses and infrastructure investments. The USGS National Streamgage Monitoring Network serves as the stethoscope on America's rivers and water supplies, and the USGS must lead our community in water data and science, providing the essential standards and communication to assure reliable water information is accessible when and where it is needed. Full implementation of these programs is a prudent federal investment in the data and science needed to support the full set of federal responsibilities, while reducing disaster impacts, enhancing the sustainability of our communities, our economies and our ecosystems.

Congress needs the National Streamgage Monitoring Network: to evaluate implementation of many federal reservoir projects, numerous tribal agreements and international treaties, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc.

With your help, we hope that Congress will enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP, as directed in PL 111-11, and match the non-federal investment in the USGS monitoring network and interpretive studies needed to understand water quality and climate trends, to forecast floods, storm surge and droughts, and to provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and to monitor compliance with federal treaties, compacts and Native American trust responsibilities.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy (phe@riverswork.com or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,



Cindy Lowry, Executive Director
Alabama Rivers Alliance



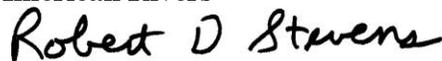
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director
American Canoe Association



Keith L. Seitter, Executive Director
American Meteorological Society



Jim Bradley, Sr Director of Government Relations
American Rivers



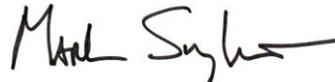
Robert D. Stevens, President
American Society of Civil Engineers



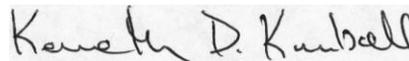
John C. Tracy, President
American Water Resources Association



Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association



Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater



Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research
Appalachian Mountain Club



Jonathan D. Arthur, President
Association of American State Geologists

Timothy H. Quinn, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

Martha Clark Mettler, President
Association of Clean Water Administrators

Jennifer Mock Schaeffer, Gov't Affairs Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Lori C. Spragens, Executive Director
Association of State Dam Safety Officials

Chad Berginnis, Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers

Don A. Barnett, Engineer-Manager
Bear River Commission

Bill Jennings, Chairman
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Mary Munson, Executive Director
Coastal States Organization

Don A. Barnett, Executive Director
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Doug Kemper, Executive Director
Colorado Water Congress

Steve Tambini, Executive Director
Delaware River Basin Commission

Steve Cochran, Director, Miss River Delta Project
Environmental Defense Fund

Eileen Fielding, Executive Director
Farmington River Watershed Association

Tim Eder, Executive Director
Great Lakes Commission

Kelli Paige, Executive Director
Great Lakes Observing System

John Seebach, Chair
Hydropower Reform Coalition

Kevin Lewis, Conservation Program Director
Idaho Rivers United

Norm Semanko, Executive Director
Idaho Water Users Association

Phillip Greenlee, President & CEO
International Federation of Fly Fishers

Carlton Haywood, Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

Edward Swaim, Chairman
Interstate Council on Water Policy

Deborah M. Hamlin, Executive Director
Irrigation Association

Dan Boward, Secretary
Maryland Water Monitoring Council

Ken Kirk, Executive Director
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Susan Gilson, Executive Director
National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies

John C. Fetterman, Deputy Executive Director
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director
National Drought Mitigation Center

David C. Curtis, Executive Director
National Hydrologic Warning Council

Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director
National Hydropower Association

Ken P. Norton, Chairman
National Tribal Water Council

Bob Johnson, Executive Director
National Water Resource Association

Adam Kolton, VP for Federal Advocacy
National Wildlife Federation

Kameran Olney, Director of US Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy

Ron Poltak, Executive Director
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Richard Harrison, Executive Director
Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission

April Snell, Executive Director
Oregon Water Resources Congress

Gordon W. "Jeff" Fassett, Chairman
Red River Compact Commission

Jim Schneider, Chairman
Republican River Compact Commission

Margaret Miner, Executive Director
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Nicole Silk, Executive Director
River Network

Andrew Dehoff, Executive Director
Susquehanna River Basin Commission

Leroy Goodson, General Manager
Texas Water Conservation Association

Chris Wood, President & Chief Executive Officer
Trout Unlimited

Don A. Ostler, Executive Director
Upper Colorado River Compact Commission

Dru Buntin, Executive Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Tom Myrum, Executive Director
Washington State Water Resources Association

Tim Williams, Director, Government & Public Affairs
Water Environment Federation

Lesli Allison, Executive Director
Western Landowners Alliance

Tony Willardson, Executive Director
Western States Water Council

Sue Lowry, Commissioner
Yellowstone River Compact Commission

COALITION SUPPORTING THE USGS NATIONAL STREAMGAGE MONITORING NETWORK

Congressman Ken Calvert, Chairman
Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Ranking Member

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
2363 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 9, 2015

Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING

Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2016

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As leaders in the undersigned organizations, we urge your support to enable the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to fully implement its design for the **National Streamgauge Monitoring Network**, which includes the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and the Cooperative Water Program (CWP).

The members of our organizations rely on the water data and science that the USGS produces and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the USGS Cooperative Water Program. America’s need to understand and anticipate streamflow, groundwater levels, tidal surge, precipitation and water quality changes is increasing every year in relation to our planning public safety, land use and economic development; and our infrastructure planning and ecological commitments magnify those needs. Unfortunately, the federal funds appropriated to Interior/USGS for the National Streamgauge Monitoring Network have not kept up with this Nation’s need (or with the approximately \$85 million contributed by over 800 non-federal Cooperators).

The USGS National Streamgauge Monitoring Network, approximately 8,100 streamgages, serves the federal need and provides the national benchmark for an integrated monitoring network and a proven source of reliable scientific information that we all need to support well-informed decision making in the public and private sectors across a wide variety of water resource planning, design and operational functions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams, levees, and other infrastructure;
- forecasting storm surge, flood and drought conditions and issuing emergency advisories;
- identifying flood-prone areas to protect lives and property and reduce disaster relief expenses;
- protecting water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for water supply, irrigation, hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing safety information for boating and other water-based recreation;
- analyzing climate trends and evaluating community and regional response options; and
- projecting future water needs and availability for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses.

Concern for the long-term continuity and reliability of our national streamgaging data led the Congress to ask USGS for a solution in 1998. The NSIP was designed by USGS and authorized by Congress in 2009 to operate as a federally-funded “backbone” for the National Streamgauge Network necessary to fulfill 5 specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.”

Unfortunately, about 25% of the NSIP gages are still not active due to insufficient federal funding. In 2014, the highest-priority streamgages were funded by the NSIP, the CWP, and USGS partners; 976 of these streamgages were fully funded by the USGS (through NSIP), increasing the number of USGS fully funded streamgages by 182 due to the \$6M increase that Congress appropriated for expansion of the National Streamgauge Network.

Even with that \$6M and the \$1.2M that Congress added for FY-2015, 70% of the active NSIP streamgages still rely upon a patchwork of funding, a significant portion of which comes from non-federal agencies.

The National Streamgage Monitoring Network has served America well for 120 years, and the cost-share partnership with state, tribal, interstate and local agencies supports the full network for surface water monitoring that Congress and the federal agencies need to inform their decisions. Currently, USGS can support only about 1/3 of the cost-shared component of the Streamgage Network and interpretive studies, compared with 50% in the past. This shifts more of the financial burden for the National Streamgage Monitoring Network onto the state, tribal and local cost-share partners. As a result, the continuity of this national science function is still vulnerable and cannot be considered reliable to meet federal and other national needs.

While we acknowledge that the federal budget needs to adapt to economic concerns, the repeated cost of storm, flooding and drought impacts make reliable data and science more essential than ever in protecting our communities, businesses and infrastructure investments. The USGS National Streamgage Monitoring Network serves as the stethoscope on America's rivers and water supplies, and the USGS must lead our community in water data and science, providing the essential standards and communication to assure reliable water information is accessible when and where it is needed. Full implementation of these programs is a prudent federal investment in the data and science needed to support the full set of federal responsibilities, while reducing disaster impacts, enhancing the sustainability of our communities, our economies and our ecosystems.

Congress needs the National Streamgage Monitoring Network: to evaluate implementation of many federal reservoir projects, numerous tribal agreements and international treaties, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc.

With your help, we hope that Congress will enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP, as directed in PL 111-11, and match the non-federal investment in the USGS monitoring network and interpretive studies needed to understand water quality and climate trends, to forecast floods, storm surge and droughts, and to provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and to monitor compliance with federal treaties, compacts and Native American trust responsibilities.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy (phe@riverswork.com or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,



Cindy Lowry, Executive Director
Alabama Rivers Alliance



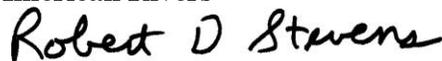
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director
American Canoe Association



Keith L. Seitter, Executive Director
American Meteorological Society



Jim Bradley, Sr Director of Government Relations
American Rivers



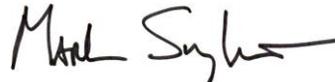
Robert D. Stevens, President
American Society of Civil Engineers



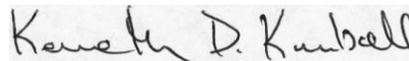
John C. Tracy, President
American Water Resources Association



Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association



Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater



Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research
Appalachian Mountain Club



Jonathan D. Arthur, President
Association of American State Geologists

Timothy H. Quinn, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

Martha Clark Mettler, President
Association of Clean Water Administrators

Jennifer Mock Schaeffer, Gov't Affairs Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Lori C. Spragens, Executive Director
Association of State Dam Safety Officials

Chad Berginnis, Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers

Don A. Barnett, Engineer-Manager
Bear River Commission

Bill Jennings, Chairman
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Mary Munson, Executive Director
Coastal States Organization

Don A. Barnett, Executive Director
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Doug Kemper, Executive Director
Colorado Water Congress

Steve Tambini, Executive Director
Delaware River Basin Commission

Steve Cochran, Director, Miss River Delta Project
Environmental Defense Fund

Eileen Fielding, Executive Director
Farmington River Watershed Association

Tim Eder, Executive Director
Great Lakes Commission

Kelli Paige, Executive Director
Great Lakes Observing System

John Seebach, Chair
Hydropower Reform Coalition

Kevin Lewis, Conservation Program Director
Idaho Rivers United

Norm Semanko, Executive Director
Idaho Water Users Association

Phillip Greenlee, President & CEO
International Federation of Fly Fishers

Carlton Haywood, Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

Edward Swaim, Chairman
Interstate Council on Water Policy

Deborah M. Hamlin, Executive Director
Irrigation Association

Dan Boward, Secretary
Maryland Water Monitoring Council

Ken Kirk, Executive Director
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Susan Gilson, Executive Director
National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies

John C. Fetterman, Deputy Executive Director
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director
National Drought Mitigation Center

David C. Curtis, Executive Director
National Hydrologic Warning Council

Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director
National Hydropower Association

Ken P. Norton, Chairman
National Tribal Water Council

Bob Johnson, Executive Director
National Water Resource Association

Adam Kolton, VP for Federal Advocacy
National Wildlife Federation

Kameran Olney, Director of US Government Relations
The Nature Conservancy

Ron Poltak, Executive Director
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Richard Harrison, Executive Director
Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission

April Snell, Executive Director
Oregon Water Resources Congress

Gordon W. "Jeff" Fassett, Chairman
Red River Compact Commission

Jim Schneider, Chairman
Republican River Compact Commission

Margaret Miner, Executive Director
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Nicole Silk, Executive Director
River Network

Andrew Dehoff, Executive Director
Susquehanna River Basin Commission

Leroy Goodson, General Manager
Texas Water Conservation Association

Chris Wood, President & Chief Executive Officer
Trout Unlimited

Don A. Ostler, Executive Director
Upper Colorado River Compact Commission

Dru Buntin, Executive Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Tom Myrum, Executive Director
Washington State Water Resources Association

Tim Williams, Director, Government & Public Affairs
Water Environment Federation

Lesli Allison, Executive Director
Western Landowners Alliance

Tony Willardson, Executive Director
Western States Water Council

Sue Lowry, Commissioner
Yellowstone River Compact Commission