

Senator John Kennedy  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
Development, Appropriations  
United States Senate

Senator Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
Development, Appropriations  
United States Senate

Representative Chuck Fleischmann  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
Development, Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives

Representative Marcy Kaptur  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
Development, Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives

June 18, 2025

**RE: Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Funding for FY2026**

Dear Senators Kennedy and Murray and Representatives Fleischmann and Kaptur,

The undersigned 45 stakeholders representing water management and use, agriculture, business, outdoor recreation, conservation, and other interests write to request your support for robust annual funding for the Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSMART program in the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations process for Energy and Water Development.

The popular and competitive WaterSMART program is a cornerstone of Reclamation’s mission to manage, develop, and protect water and energy resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner for millions of Americans. WaterSMART supports cost-shared funding for projects that further activities core to Reclamation’s mission, ensuring water availability and conservation, drought planning and response, energy security, habitat restoration, irrigation modernization, and improved fish passage that support the recovery and delisting of endangered species, as well as other similar projects that help address the most pressing water challenges in the western United States. Most WaterSMART projects require at least 50 percent cost sharing to leverage non-federal financial resources. To date, Reclamation has selected 2,364 projects and plans, to be funded with \$3.28 billion in WaterSMART funding, in conjunction with \$8.75 billion in non-federal funding, across the western states.<sup>1</sup> Completed WaterSMART projects are saving an estimated 1.7 million acre-feet per year; enough water for more than 4.6 million people.

In particular, we support continued FY2026 funding for WaterSMART programs **at FY2024 funding levels or above**, including: \$15.017 million for Basin Studies; \$8 million for Cooperative Watershed Management; \$30 million for Drought Response and Comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program Data Portal, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/bf5c5357e7044e0c80d5a55788d1db34/> .

Drought Plans; \$30 million for Title XVI Program (water recycling and reuse); \$6.5 million for Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program; and \$54 million for WaterSMART Grants.

Projects funded by the WaterSMART program often provide the dual benefit of water savings and ecosystem benefits, resulting in a high return on investment. The projects funded by these programs are essential to building drought resilience in a hotter and drier West, including ensuring the safe, reliable, and efficient management of water resources for people and agriculture. Furthermore, WaterSMART-funded projects play an integral part in supporting local communities in their wildfire preparedness efforts.

Federally funded WaterSMART projects have reduced risks associated with natural disasters, increased water security, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved agricultural resiliency, and created jobs, especially in rural communities. These federal funds are also crucial in addressing the immense need for water infrastructure investments in the West, which exceeds the capacity of states and local governments to finance on their own. As drought conditions continue to intensify, sustained, annual funding for these activities is more important than ever.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Water Efficiency  
American Rivers  
Amigos Bravos  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies  
Bernalillo County Natural Resource Services  
Blua Consulting LLC  
California Farm Bureau  
California Water Efficiency Partnership  
City of Round Rock, Texas  
City of Surprise - Arizona  
City of Thornton, Colorado  
Colorado River Board of California  
ConserveTrack, LLC  
County of Santa Barbara Water Resources  
Ecoblue® | Water is life.  
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Farmers Conservation Alliance  
Gallatin River Task Force  
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and the  
Outdoors (HECHO)  
Imperial Irrigation District  
Laguna Beach County Water District

Mesa Water District  
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California  
Monterey Peninsula Water Management District  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
National Association of Landscape Professionals  
National Audubon Society  
National Water Resources Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Rancho California Water District  
San Diego County Water Authority  
San Dieguito Water District  
Seattle Public Utilities, City of Seattle  
Southern Nevada Water Authority  
Southwestern Water Conservation District  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Trout Unlimited  
Utah Division of Water Resources  
Vallecitos Water District  
Walnut Valley Water District  
WaterNow Alliance  
West Basin Municipal Water District  
Western Landowners Alliance