



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Web Page: [www.westgov.org/wswc](http://www.westgov.org/wswc)

Position No. 290

May 17, 2007

The Honorable David R. Obey, Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-218 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey:

On behalf of the Western States Water Council, representing eighteen states, including the seventeen Reclamation States, I am writing to express our concern over the Administration's decision to zero out funding for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Technical Assistance to States (TATS) Program. Similarly, we are disappointed with the \$11 million request for Reclamation's Water 2025 program, which is a \$3.5 million reduction from the Administration's FY 2007 request of \$14.5 million.

The Council supports Water 2025 and the Challenge Grants Program, which provides cost-shared grants to non-Federal entities, including States, for projects to conserve water, increase water use efficiency, facilitate water markets, enhance water management, or implement other actions to prevent water-related crises or conflicts in watersheds that have a nexus to Federal water projects within Reclamation States.

Reclamation's Water 2025 Challenge Grants Program, in cooperation with States and other entities, provides a non-regulatory, incentive-based approach to assisting water districts, in accordance with state law, develop and implement effective water conservation plans and programs. Since it is a cost-shared program leveraging federal funds, any reduction in spending also results in a related reduction in non-federal contributions and adds to the current backlog of eligible, worthwhile conservation projects.

The TATS Program is designed to enable Reclamation to assist states, state-chartered entities, legislatively authorized political subdivisions of a state, and Indian Tribes in addressing water and related resource issues. Technical assistance is provided only by Reclamation personnel upon an official request by a state or tribe.

In FY 2007, \$1.8 million was requested to assist a number of our member states. In general, assistance is limited to no more than \$75,000 and is completed within 12 months. Some of the activities funded include providing data, technical knowledge and expertise, to aid in the conservation and allocation of resources. Such assistance may be provided in both the evaluation and management of water resource programs and projects. Some typical areas of assistance include, but are not limited to environmental, economic, engineering, and social analysis.

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Reclamation's Area Managers and Regional Directors enter into agreements to provide appropriate assistance, unrelated to a funded Reclamation project, on a nonreimbursable basis. Typically, the requested assistance or analysis must be to provide input into a larger state or tribal study or activity. Such assistance is not provided for final design, construction or the purchase of capital equipment. Further, the TATS program is not used to supplement efforts under other ongoing Reclamation programs.

TATS allows Reclamation to actively participate as an important partner in water related state and tribal activities, but the promise and products of such cooperative and collaborative work will come to an end without Congressional action to restore funding. Without significant appropriations for the Water 2025 Program, it will similarly fail to achieve its potential benefits at a time when western water resources challenges are increasingly difficult.

Both these programs are consistent with the Western Governors' Association's June 2006 report, "Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future," which specifically refers to the need to explore the relative merits of water conservation and water use efficiency (demand management), and "optimize appropriate opportunities to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable quality are available to sustain the growth and prosperity of western states."

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duane A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "S".

Duane A. Smith, Chairman  
Western States Water Council