



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Web Page: www.westgov.org/lwswc

July 11, 2008

Position No. 306
(See Position No. 267)

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
The Capitol S-131
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
The Capitol S-206
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd, Ranking Member Cochran, Chairwoman Feinstein and Ranking Member Allard:

On behalf of the Western States Water Council, I am writing to urge you to support full FY2009 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) funding of \$110 million for the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and sufficient funding for the Cooperative Water Program (CWP) to match non-USGS contributions. Full NSIP implementation requires substantially more than the \$23.8 million requested by the President (\$20 million was appropriated for FY2008). The \$62.3 million requested by the President (and \$62.8 million appropriated for FY2008) would be less than half what is needed by the Cooperative Water Program to reverse the slow erosion in spending that is robbing us of streamgages and data that is vital for the sound management of our western water resources. The President's FY2009 request is not sufficient to reverse the continuing decline in real federal spending due to unfunded or only partially funded federal salary and other cost increases.

Our members are critical partners in the Cooperative Program, and we believe this should be the highest USGS funding priority related to water. However, the failure of the Administration and the Congress to match state contributions on a 50%-50% basis – with flat or nearly flat federal spending in the face of continually rising federal costs – has inappropriately shifted to the states the lion's share of the financial burden for maintaining the national streamgaging system. In FY2007, our member states provided \$67.87 million, while matching federal appropriations totaled only \$32.766 million -- \$35.104 million short. On a national level, the USGS share of the Cooperative Water Program has been far less than the approximately \$138 million contributed annually by Cooperators since FY2004 – and cutting funds from the CWP budget to enhance the NSIP has not helped. Federal funding has been allowed to erode to the point that it threatens the availability, quantity, quality and timeliness of this basic data. States cannot continue to bear this increasing financial burden, which threatens this long-time partnership.

With the number of streamgages declining and the need for streamflow data increasing, human life, our quality of life, our security, and our property are at considerably greater risk. Myriad federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies, as well as private entities and individuals, use this data to

manage flooding and drought, assess water quality and predict future water supplies for our agricultural, municipal and industrial needs, plus energy/hydropower, recreation and environmental uses (including protecting endangered species). The data from streamgages with over 30-years of record is also vital to measuring and monitoring long-term changes that may be related to climate change. Water resources planning, water rights administration, project operation and flow forecasting capabilities, emergency response and water quality assessments depend on this data that is so important to so many people, businesses and agencies nationwide.

Recognizing the Nation's fiscal challenges, with record drought in the West and Southeast, earlier and earlier melting snowpacks, and record flooding in the Midwest, timely and accurate streamflow information for sound water resources and emergency management has never been more important.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Garland Erbele".

Garland Erbele, Chairman
Western States Water Council