



March 31, 2008

Position No. 298

Dr. Robert Hirsch
USGS Associate Director for Water
409 National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192-0002

Dear Dr. Hirsch:

As you know, the Interstate Council on Water Policy and the Western States Water Council have been focused upon increasing funding support for the Cooperative Water Program and the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) for several years. The federal role in gathering and analyzing basin water data is crucial and we continue to believe that we need to work diligently toward full funding of the NSIP gaging network.

The President's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request includes the new Water for America initiative. We understand this will include regional scale assessments of the Nation's 21 water resources regions, and intensive studies within those regions. We urge you to work closely with our two organizations and our member states and interstate entities as you develop the scope and schedule of these intensive and regional studies.

We don't oppose these regional assessments and water availability and use analyses, but we are concerned that \$2.25 million for this new initiative has been added in the NSIP budget line item, which could have adverse future ramifications, if these studies were to compete for funding with streamgages.

Of the \$5 million increase in the NSIP budget, we understand that only about \$750,000 will go towards new or reactivated streamgages, and \$2 million will be used to accelerate the radio transmitter upgrades, which helps maintain the long-term stability of the network. We support these expenditures as part of the NSIP budget line item.

We do not support funding Water for America programs at the expense of the streamgaging network. We find it troubling that NSIP spending is only about 20% of the USGS full operational cost estimate, and that federal CWP expenditures continue to

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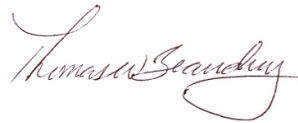
decline. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that the streamgaging network is not further compromised.

We appreciate the briefing you provided our organizations on this new initiative in Washington DC in early March and look forward to working with you and your staff to make sure that the USGS data collection programs continue to be supported to the maximum extent possible.

With best regards,



Duane A. Smith
Chairman
Western States Water Council



Thomas W. Beauduy
Chairman
Interstate Council on Water Policy