

# SUPPORT FOR USGS WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAMS

Senator Dianne Feinstein, Chairwoman  
Senator Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
Room S-128, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

December 9, 2009

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2011

Dear Madame Chairman and Ranking Member Alexander:

The 56 undersigned organizations urge your support to enable the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to fully implement its design for the **National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP)** beginning in FY-2011 and to restore the capacity for USGS to match non-federal cost-share investments in the **Cooperative Water Program (CWP)** on a 50:50 basis. Full implementation of the NSIP will require an annual appropriation of \$110 million (\$27.7 million was enacted for FY-2010). With a fully functioning NSIP, the USGS will also need approximately \$95 million for the CWP to restore its capacity to fully match state, tribal and other non-federal investments in data collection and interpretive investigations (the FY-2010 budget included only \$65.5 million).

Members of our organizations rely heavily on the water data and science that these two programs produce and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the Cooperative Water Program. Nationwide, our need for streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, water quality, precipitation and other water resource data increases every year in relation to our growing populations, economic development, land uses, changing climate, ecological awareness and aging infrastructure. Unfortunately, the NSIP and CWP budgets have not kept up with America’s growing needs or the annual cost-share contributions of over 1,500 Cooperators (approximately \$163 million).

The NSIP and CWP are proven, reliable sources of sound scientific information required by decision makers in both the public and private sectors for a wide variety of analytical, planning, design and management functions. The data and science are used on a regular basis by federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies, and by many businesses, landowners, public interest organizations and individuals for many essential decisions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams 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;
- administration of water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing for safe public recreation;
- analyzing climate change and evaluating 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 and USGS proposed the NSIP in 1999. NSIP was intended to operate as a federally-funded “backbone,” supporting a national streamgaging framework of approximately 4,770 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill five specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design in 2004 and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.” However, of the 4,770 streamgages that are necessary to sustain those five national purposes, more than 425 have not been installed yet, more than 970 need to be reactivated and more than 2,700 active NSIP

gages are funded (wholly or partially) with CWP funds. Furthermore, most of those streamgages still need to be “flood hardened” and updated for real-time communications in order to provide reliable and timely flood forecast information.

Since 2001, when the Congress first provided funding to the NSIP, more than 80% of the NSIP streamgages have been supported by the CWP cost-share partners and NSIP has not provided the stability that is needed. While the CWP has served America well for over 110 years, USGS is now able to support less than 1/3 of its cost. In 2008, USGS operated a network of about 7,663 active streamgages nationwide, but more than 965 have been “discontinued” since 2001 due to inadequate funding. Many of those had over 50 years of continuous record, which gives their loss much greater significance. Another 277 streamgages in 31 states are currently identified as being at risk or have already been recently discontinued.

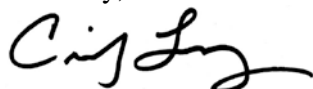
Reliable sources of data and science have never been more important in protecting American communities, businesses, infrastructure investments while we recover in many states from the severe flooding and droughts that have caused so much damage and adapt to the consequences of climate change.

We believe that the Committee should enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP plan as soon as possible and we urge you to appropriate \$110 million in FY-2011 for that purpose. Full implementation of the NSIP would help reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and provide essential information needed to assess water quality and climate change, forecast floods (including storm surge) and droughts and provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and monitor compliance with federal treaty, compact and Native American trust responsibilities.

By itself, however, the NSIP cannot meet our national need for the data and science required to manage water resources in a sustainable manner and federal funding for the USGS share of the CWP data collection and investigations of at least \$95 million will be necessary. Re-balancing the CWP cost-share to the long-standing tradition of a 50:50 partnership is especially important now, as state, tribal and local agencies confront recession-driven fiscal challenges.

These measures would represent a very reasonable investment, considering the magnitude of our ongoing disaster emergency expenses and the federal responsibilities and programs that depend on information from the NSIP streamgages. If we can provide additional information, please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy ([phe@riverswork.com](mailto:phe@riverswork.com) or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,



Cindy Lowry, Executive Director  
**Alabama Rivers Alliance**



Wade Blackwood, Executive Director  
**American Canoe Association**



Andrew Fahlund, VP for Conservation  
**American Rivers**



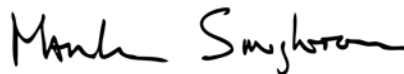
Patrick J. Natale, Executive Director  
**American Society of Civil Engineers**



Gerald Sehlke, 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**



David R. Wunsch, President  
**Association of American State Geologists**

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

Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director  
**Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies**

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

Larry A. Larson, Executive Director  
**Association of State Floodplain Managers**

Linda Eichmiller, Executive Director  
**Association of State & Interstate Water  
Pollution Control Administrators**

Jack A. Barnett, Executive Director  
**Bear River Commission**

Bill Jennings, Chairman  
**California Sportfishing Protection Alliance**

Kristen M. Fletcher, Executive Director  
**Coastal States Organization**

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

Doug Kemper, Executive Director  
**Colorado Water Congress**

Carol R. Collier, Executive Director  
**Delaware River Basin Commission**

Mary E. Kelly, VP for Rivers & Deltas  
**Environmental Defense Fund**

Phillip Greenlee, President/ Chairman of the Board  
**Federation of Flyfishers**

Joseph A. Hankins, Director  
**The Freshwater Institute &  
Vice President, The Conservation Fund**

Tim Eder, Executive Director  
**Great Lakes Commission**

Jennifer Read, Executive Director  
**Great Lakes Observing System**

John Seebach, Chair  
**Hydropower Reform Coalition**

Bill Sedivy, Executive Director  
**Idaho Rivers United**

Joseph K. Hoffman, Executive Director  
**Interstate Commission on the Potomac River  
Basin**


Susan Sullivan, Chairman  
**Interstate Council on Water Policy**

Ross Brady, Executive Director  
**Interstate Environmental Commission**

Deborah M. Hamlin, Executive Director  
**Irrigation Association**



David L. Pope, Executive Director  
**Missouri River Association of States & Tribes**



Ken Kirk, Executive Director  
**National Association of Clean Water Agencies**



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



John M. Johnson, Executive Director  
**National Association of State Boating Law Administrators**



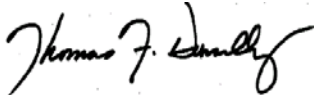
Jacqueline Johnson Pata, Executive Director  
**National Congress of American Indians**



Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director  
**National Drought Mitigation Center**



Leila A. Taha, President  
**National Flood Determination Association**



Thomas F. Donnelly, Executive Director  
**National Water Resources Association**



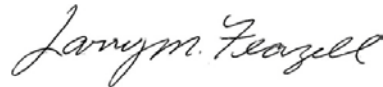
David R. Conrad, Sr. Water Resources Specialist  
**National Wildlife Federation**



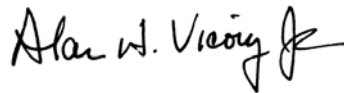
Brian Richter, Co-Leader, Global Freshwater Team  
**The Nature Conservancy**



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



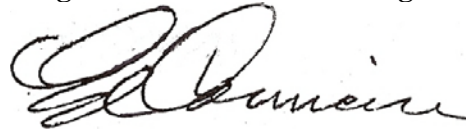
Larry M. Feazell, Executive Director  
**Ohio River Basin Water Resources Association**



Alan H. Vicory, Jr., Executive Director  
**Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission**



Anita Winkler, Executive Director  
**Oregon Water Resources Congress**



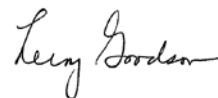
Ed Council, Chief Executive Officer  
**Paddlesports Industry Association**



Margaret Miner, Executive Director  
**River Alliance of Connecticut**



Paul O. Swartz, Executive Director  
**Susquehanna River Basin Commission**



Leroy Goodson, Executive Director  
**Texas Water Conservation Association**



Charles Gauvin, President & Chief Executive Officer  
**Trout Unlimited**



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



Barb Naramore, Executive Director  
**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**



Tom Myrum, Executive Director  
**Washington State Water Resources  
Association**



Tim Williams, Managing Director for Government  
Affairs  
**Water Environment Federation**



Garland Erbele, Chairman  
**Western States Water Council**



Mary Sexton, Montana Commissioner



Patrick T. Tyrell, Wyoming Commissioner  
**Yellowstone River Compact Commission**

**Copies to:**

Senate Appropriations Committee Members

Ken Salazar, Secretary, US Department of the Interior

Marcia McNutt, Director, US Geological Survey

Peter Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget