

# **SUPPORT FOR USGS WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAMS**

Senator Jack Reed, Chairman  
Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

February 4, 2013

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2014

Dear Senator Reed and Senator Murkowski:

We 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-2014 and to restore the USGS capacity to fully match non-federal cost-share investments in the **Cooperative Water Program (CWP)**.

Members of our organizations rely on the water data and science that these two programs produce and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the Cooperative Water Program. America’s need for streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, precipitation and water quality data increases every year in relation to the land use and economic development needs in our states, and our infrastructure planning and ecological commitments magnify those needs. Unfortunately, the Interior/USGS budgets for the NSIP and CWP have not kept up with the nation’s needs (or with the approximately \$160 million contributed annually by over 1,500 Cooperators).

Together, the NSIP and CWP serve the nation as an integrated monitoring network and a proven source of reliable scientific information that we need to support well-informed decision making in both the public and private sectors across a wide variety of water resource planning, design and operation functions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams, levees, 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;
- protecting water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for water supply, irrigation, hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing safety information for boating and other water-based recreation;
- analyzing climate trends and evaluating community and regional 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. The NSIP was designed and authorized by Congress to operate as a federally-funded “backbone” network supporting approximately 4,750 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill 5 specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design 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, more than 275 of the 4,750 streamgages have not been installed yet, and almost 1000 were installed and subsequently discontinued. 87% of the active NSIP streamgages still do not have reliable NSIP funding and depend upon a patchwork of less predictable funds.

While the CWP streamgages have served America well for more than 100 years, USGS is able to support about 1/3 of their cost today. The CWP cost-share is only available for streamgages that meet an important

national need, and this partnership with state, tribal, interstate and local agencies sustains the rest of the national need for surface water measurement. Unfortunately, a disproportionate share of the financial burden for this national asset has shifted onto those partners and the effectiveness of this partnership is increasingly at risk.

We recognize that our federal budget needs to adapt to recession impacts and deficit concerns. Nonetheless, due to the repetition of storms, flooding and droughts that our nation faces, reliable science has never been more important in protecting our communities, businesses and infrastructure investments by reducing our vulnerability. These coordinated monitoring programs, NSIP and CWP, serve as the stethoscope on America's rivers and water supplies, and the federal government has an crucial role in water data and science, providing the essential standards and communication to assure reliable water information is accessible to all Americans when and where it is needed. Providing for full implementation of these programs would represent a very reasonable federal investment in the data and science needed to reduce disaster impacts, enhance the sustainability of our communities and economy, and support the wide range of federal water-related responsibilities.

We hope that you can enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP plan as directed in PL 111-11, to reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and provide the data needed to assess water quality and climate trends, to forecast floods (including storm surge) and droughts, and to provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and monitor compliance with federal treaties, compacts and Native American trust responsibilities. Full funding for the federal share of the CWP data collection and investigations is also necessary.

If we can answer your questions or 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).

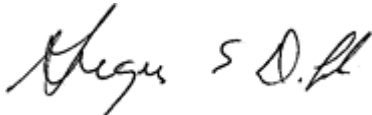
Sincerely,



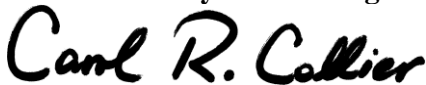
Greg Rolf, Stewardship Coordinator  
**American Canoe Association**



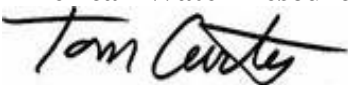
Jim Bradley, Sr Director of Government Relations  
**American Rivers**



Gregory E. DiLoreto, President  
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Carol Collier, President  
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Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director  
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Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research  
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Harvey Thorleifson, President  
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Chad Berginnis, Executive Director  
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Paul Harrison, Senior Director, Water Program  
**Environmental Defense Fund**

Phillip Greenlee, Chairman of the Board  
**International Federation of Fly Fishers**

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

John Seebach, Chair  
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Kevin Lewis, Conservation Program Director  
**Idaho Rivers United**

Carlton Haywood, Executive Director  
**Interstate Commission on the Potomac River  
Basin**

Ryan Mueller, Chairman  
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**Missouri River Association of States & Tribes**

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**National Association of Clean Water Agencies**

Susan Gilson, Executive Director  
**National Association of Flood & Stormwater  
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John M. Johnson, Executive Director & CEO  
**National Association of State Boating Law  
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Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director  
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Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director  
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Malia Hale, Director for Coasts and Floodplains  
**National Wildlife Federation**

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**Water Environment Federation**

Phil Ward, Chairman  
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Sue Lowry, Commissioner  
**Yellowstone River Compact Commission**

**Copies to:**

Appropriations Committee Members  
Ken Salazar, Secretary, US Department of the Interior  
Marcia McNutt, Director, US Geological Survey  
Jeffery Zients, Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget