

Testimony of Oregon Coalition Supporting USGS National Streamgauge Network
Submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

April 14, 2016

RE: FY17 Budget for the U.S. Geological Survey National Streamflow Information Program

As a collection of water stakeholders in Oregon we are concerned about ongoing lack of available data on water in our state and we urge your support of the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Streamflow Network (formerly known as the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and Cooperative Water Program). We are a diverse group of water stakeholders with a common goal: to advocate for common sense water policies that move Oregon's economy, communities, and environment toward a secure water future. In order to achieve our goal, the members we represent need consistent, accurate and real time data on streams in our state. While we are encouraged by the \$150 million increase in the President's request over 2015 enacted levels, and specifically the \$1.3 million increase for stream flow information, it is not enough of an increase to fully fund, even with cost-share partners, this immensely important program.

FY17 Appropriations

We recognize that our country continues to face difficult economic times and that we must make strategic investments with scarce resources. However, that statement rings true not just in regards to funding, but also our natural resources and more precisely, water. In 2015 the American west suffered from a severe drought and like many other Western states, the conditions in 2015 have deeply impacted Oregon communities, (25 of 36 counties had formal drought declarations). For Oregon, the drought stems from a lack of snowpack that serves as the natural water storage throughout the year for many farms, communities, and fish and wildlife.

The impacts may take longer to show, but drought can be as devastating as earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. And like other natural disasters, the best way to survive and help communities recover is through coordinated planning and developing diverse tools to use when these crises occur. However, our communities cannot adequately plan for any water year without accurate streamflow data. While we all have different ideas about the best paths forward, we agree on one thing: the need for increased accurate streamflow data.

The funding for the National Streamflow Network could be leveraged with the current proposal from the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to reestablish OWRD's engagement in the Cooperative Water Program with USGS. Within the water advocate community in Oregon the need for additional gauges and more readily available data is an issue that is on the forefront of discussions regarding how to best manage our waterways. The funding dollars spent on the National Streamflow Network are dollars that will work toward better data and provide valuable information needed as we work toward a secure water future for Oregon and the nation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we applaud the Administration on their willingness to increase funding for the USGS National Streamflow Network and we would like to see even more funding allocated to this important program. As we continue to navigate in an uncertain climate, we need the valuable streamflow data this program provides to aid in all our work in developing water management solutions. We respectfully request adequate funding to fully implement the USGS National Streamflow Network for FY17.

Sincerely,

Michael Freese
Associated Oregon Industries

Rob Kirschner
The Freshwater Trust

Tracy Rutten
League of Oregon Cities

Jeff Stone
Oregon Association of Nurseries

JR Cook
Northeast Oregon Water Association

Mark Landauer
Special Districts Association of Oregon

April Snell
Oregon Water Resources Congress