

# FY 2021 APPROPRIATIONS TESTIMONY ON KEY FUNDING PROGRAMS

---

## Senate

- ◆ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, WaterSMART Program
- ◆ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs
- ◆ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works Program
- ◆ U.S. Geological Survey, Water Data and Science Program
- ◆ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund Program
- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program

## House

- ◆ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, WaterSMART Program
- ◆ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs
- ◆ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works Program
- ◆ U.S. Geological Survey, Water Data and Science Program
- ◆ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund Program
- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations Committee,  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
March 27, 2020

**RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY2021 Budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) continues to support increased funding for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Water and Related Resources program and requests that a minimum of \$1.5 billion be included in the FY2021 Budget. OWRC would like to see at least \$50 million for the WaterSMART Initiative and we remain concerned the proposed FY2021 budget for the Water and Related Resources program will be woefully insufficient to meet the diverse water supply and infrastructure needs in the 17 Western States that Reclamation serves. Additional funding would help leverage other resources and collaborative partnerships through Reclamation's WaterSMART Initiative, as well as support increased coordination between other federal agencies on ecosystem restoration, drought adaptation, and other water related challenges.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production. About one-half of our members are in Reclamation Projects. Additionally, most of our members have contracts with Reclamation or have been awarded grants under the WaterSMART program, which has been greatly beneficial to districts meeting agricultural needs.

Our members from across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates that local communities' work together to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. Funding collaborative initiatives, like the ones housed under Reclamation's Water and Related Resources programs, are valuable tools to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs throughout basins, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the agricultural economy that produces food and fiber for our nation.

**WaterSMART Initiative**

OWRC strongly supports Reclamation's ongoing WaterSMART Initiative and increased funding for the WaterSMART Grants and Water Conservation Field Services Programs—the two programs used the most by Oregon's irrigation districts to support water conservation activities. These programs are an important part of the overall funding package for water resources projects collaboratively developed by local communities, supported with local and state funding, and designed to meet those communities' unique needs while still meeting the goal of water conservation.

### ***Water Conservation Field Services Program (WCFSP)***

The WCFSP is a key component in supporting irrigation districts' and similar water delivery systems' water conservation efforts. In the past the WCFSP has provided a breadth of technical assistance to irrigation districts and provided partial funding for materials used to pipe and line canals, measurement and other technology, and water conservation plans—all supporting water conservation efforts being implemented by these districts. While we are supportive of exploring innovative ways to utilize reclaimed and reused water, we continue to be concerned about funding a few expensive projects in limited areas while there are large unmet needs in the other WaterSMART programs. Providing increased funding for WCFSP projects will yield more immediate and cost-effective water conservation measures in all 17 Western States.

The planning projects and technical assistance funded under the WCFSP are key components that help our member districts identify opportunities for water conservation through improved water management and capital investments. A lack of funding for the feasibility phase of projects is an impediment to the districts' ability to move forward with implementing water conservation projects like those listed below. This program provides seed money for both short and long-term planning by districts and water users that results in helping Oregon meet the competing demands for water in basins throughout the state. Furthermore, technical assistance under this program can help water suppliers plan for and adapt to potential impacts from drought.

Additionally, we believe the management of the WCFSP should remain with the Regional Offices in order to retain the close connection between Reclamation and Project managers and ensure Reclamation's resources are used to best support the management of its Projects. The WCFSP is one of the Reclamation services most appreciated by our members. The regional staff, and particularly the local area office staff, understand the unique operating and delivery challenges of the various Projects, and therefore provide very meaningful support to the managers of those Projects.

### ***WaterSMART Grants***

WaterSMART cost-share grants have supported Oregon districts' efforts to improve water delivery systems, conserve water, and implement innovative projects to meet the water needs in Oregon. These projects have been a key ingredient to the districts' cooperative efforts with other stakeholders in their respective river basins to address in-stream, water quality, and water supply needs of their basins, without reducing the amount of land to which the districts deliver water, and avoiding regulatory actions by federal or state agencies. There continues to be more applicants than available funding and additional financial resources are needed to enable local water suppliers to continue their work to conserve water and help meet the Secretary's water conservation goal. With a return of over \$5 for every \$1 of federal investment, and non-federal match generally exceeding the required amount, this program far surpasses the results of other partnerships between the federal government and local project sponsors.

### **Examples of Oregon Projects Funded through the WaterSMART Initiative**

The following projects are examples of how Reclamation's WaterSMART Initiative is helping Oregon districts. These innovative projects were awarded grant funding in late 2019 and early 2020.

- **Klamath Irrigation District, Canal Lining/Piping Project** - The District will convert 1.5 miles of the currently open canal to 3,000 feet of Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer lining and 5,000 feet of high-density polyethylene pipe. The project is expected to result in an annual water savings of 664 acre-feet which is currently lost to seepage, evaporation, and operational spills. Once the project has been completed, the District will reduce diversions from Upper Klamath Lake. The project is expected to improve lake levels to benefit fish species such as the endangered Shortnose Sucker, and to provide a potential late season supply for other water users in times of shortage. In addition, conserved water may be available for the fall waterfowl migration at the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. **Water and Energy Efficiency Grant: \$210,650 Total Cost: \$421,301**
- **Klamath Irrigation District, Canal Lining/Piping Project** - The District will also convert 1.4 miles of the currently open canal to 300 feet of Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer lining and 7,392 feet of high-density polyethylene pipe. The project is expected to result in an annual water savings of 664 acre-feet. **Water and Energy Efficiency Grant: \$219,704 Total Cost: \$439,409**
- **Middle Fork Irrigation District, Pipeline and Irrigation Efficiency Project** The District will install a high-density polyethylene pipe from its existing diversion on Coe Creek to an existing settling pond to provide clean irrigation water to its users. Coe Creek is a glacier-fed tributary of the Middle Fork Hood River, and its high sediment load restricts the District's ability to fully utilize the water during the irrigation season. When sedimentation worsens in Coe Creek, the District must meet irrigation demand with water from Laurance Reservoir and its tributaries. The District will use the settling pond to remove glacial sediment from the water before it is delivered to irrigators, thereby avoiding diversions from Laurance Lake. By more efficiently and effectively removing sediment, the project will also allow water users to install high-efficiency micro-sprinklers. **Water and Energy Efficiency Grant: \$266,600 Total Cost: \$1,460,400**
- **North Unit Irrigation District, Optimized Diversion Precision, Pump Station** – The District will install a Variable Frequency Drive on one of nine pumps that divert water from the Crooked River into the District's main canal. This project will allow for the better management and capture of District supplies. This project will improve the operational flexibility of the District by matching the pump intake rate with the flow rate of the Crooked River, ultimately allowing the District to access an additional 3,500 acre-feet per year, in a manner consistent with state water law requirements. **Drought Resiliency Grant: \$122,485 Total Cost: \$244,970**
- **Ochoco Irrigation District, System Optimization, Canal Piping Project** – The District will convert 1,790 linear feet of unlined open canal to a closed piped system. This project will increase water delivery efficiency and reduce tailwater spills. This project is supported by the District's 2012 System Optimization Review and the District's 2018 System Improvement Plan. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grant: \$75,000 Total Cost: \$182,878**
- **Talent Irrigation District, Main Canal Shotcrete Project** - The District will line 960 feet of its Main Canal with shotcrete. This project will conserve water by reducing leaks and seepage, thereby providing a more reliable supply during below-average water years. This project supports goals in the District's 2018 Water Management and Conservation Plan. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grant: \$33,143 Total Cost: \$66,286**

- **Westland Irrigation District, Integrated Flow Measurement & Control Gate Automation Project** - The District will install an automated flume gate near the bifurcation on its Main Canal into two separate canals. The flume gate will be integrated with the current Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system and will allow the District to improve delivery efficiencies through better management of flows into the two canals. This project is supported by the District's 2018-2019 Priority Plan. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grant: \$35,294 Total Cost: \$70,587**

Further innovative projects like the ones above could be developed and implemented in Oregon if more funding is made available through the WaterSMART Initiative. Additionally, OWRC would like to see the funding cap increased from \$1 million to \$5 million in areas where there are known endangered, threatened or vulnerable species. By increasing the funding cap, Reclamation would have the ability to fund projects aimed at improving species habitat at a higher level, allowing for these important projects to move forward.

### **Drought Planning and Aging Infrastructure**

OWRC is supportive of developing strategies to address potential drought related impacts to water resources. It is imperative that the nation's water infrastructure is capable of handling more frequent and severe weather events, changes in precipitation/snowpack, and other drought related impacts to water resources. Reclamation needs additional funding to coordinate and leverage state, local and other federal resources to support necessary evaluations and improvements of water infrastructure in the 17 Western States related to potential drought effects. Many of the 824 dams and reservoirs that Reclamation manages (and associated delivery systems) were built 50 to 100 years ago and are already in dire need of improvement. These improvements are costly and deferred maintenance leads to reduced system efficiency, decreased water conservation, and in some instances catastrophic failure.

Providing funding to evaluate and improve water infrastructure in the face of drought will ensure that Reclamation reservoirs and associated delivery systems can continue to provide essential water supplies used to grow food and other agricultural crops—a vital part of our local, state, and national economy, as well as ensuring food security. Reclamation's WaterSMART Basin Study program has proved to be an effective tool for analyzing the effects of drought. Past and future studies will prepare river basins throughout the 17 Western States for developing solutions to water shortages through conservation as well as building innovative new storage facilities, large and small.

We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$1.5 billion for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program for FY2021. Providing increased funding for the WaterSMART Initiative and other related programs is a wise investment that will yield benefits for our nation's economy, environment, and communities that depend on water resources. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY2021 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Address: 795 Winter Street, NE Salem, OR 97301 Phone: 503-363-0121

April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Testimony submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
March 30, 2020

**RE: FY 2021 Budget for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) strongly supports funding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. It is crucial the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has adequate resources and we request a minimum of \$300 million to leverage partnerships and tackle the complex natural resources conservation issues facing the nation. Furthermore, we are strongly supportive of coordinated federal agency watershed planning, and request funding for the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program (under PL-566), at a minimum of \$200 million in FY 2021.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

Our members from across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates local communities' work together to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. Funding programs, like the ones housed under the USDA NRCS programs, are valuable tools to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs throughout all our basins, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the agricultural economy that produces food and fiber for our nation.

**RCPP Benefits & Needs**

OWRC strongly supports robust funding for NRCS programs, particularly the RCPP, which is a critical tool for districts and other agricultural water suppliers in developing and implementing water and energy conservation projects in Oregon. While we understand the need to streamline federal agency activities and programs, it is our hope essential programs like the RCPP continue to receive the additional funding that is still needed to meet program demands. In the past, related NRCS programs, such as the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), have been highly successful in developing cooperative approaches for federal, state and local interests to address Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Clean Water Act (CWA) issues in watershed basins and sub basins. Those programs helped catalyze conservation efforts that live on in the RCPP today. RCPP currently has over 2,000 partners engaged in locally led conservation efforts that help implement collaborative basin-level solutions and reduce detrimental legal action, resulting in better outcomes for all.

Federal support of water conservation activities funded through NRCS programs, including the RCPP, is essential to the conservation of our natural resources and critical to protecting our food, energy and water supply. Since 2014, RCPP has invested \$1 billion in over 375 projects across all fifty states and Puerto Rico. That \$1 billion has leveraged an additional \$2 billion from state and local partners for a total of \$3 billion invested in water conservation projects. Among those are Oregon projects that will address water quality and drought like those described below. Irrigation districts in Oregon are the model of successful RCPP projects that “innovate, leverage additional contributions, offer impactful solutions and engage more participants.” More projects like this could be developed and implemented in Oregon and throughout the nation with additional federal support through the RCPP.

- ***East Fork Irrigation District (EFID) Watershed Restoration*** – EFID, with a diverse set of partners in the Hood River Watershed in the Columbia River Basin, will focus on a top-priority water conservation and fish habitat project in the Lower East Fork Hood River. EFID and its partners will construct Phase 1 of the Eastside Lateral pipeline project, assist agricultural producers with approximately 400 acres of on-farm water conservation practices and educate producers and farm workers on the latest irrigation water management techniques. The project will also restore one mile of spawning and rearing habitat on the East Fork Hood River for threatened steelhead, spring Chinook, and coho. The project will increase irrigation water reliability for high value food crops, improve resilience to drought, and restore instream habitat for ESA listed species.  
**RCPP Funding: \$2,033,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2022**
- ***The Wallowa Lake Irrigation Modernization Project, Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA)*** – This project will address water quantity, water quality, and inadequate habitat resource concerns in the Prairie Creek area of Wallowa County, Oregon. This project proposes to pipe 11.8 miles of private ditches, install water control structures/fish screens on newly piped ditches and install up to ten new sprinkler systems to increase on-farm conveyance and application efficiency. The actions will improve water conveyance and application efficiency, reduce fish entrainment risk decrease return flows into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River, and decrease sediment, nutrient, and bacteria inputs into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River. FCA and its partners seek to benefit threatened or endangered populations of spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead trout and bull trout.  
**RCPP Funding: \$1,730,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2021**
- ***Lower Crooked River Strategic Restoration*** – This is a comprehensive project, led by the Crooked River Watershed Council, intended to address degraded fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and riparian plant communities over 17 miles of the Crooked River in Central Oregon. Proposed restoration activities include both instream and riparian restoration to improve habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality, and agricultural productivity. In addition, the project will reduce the threat of regulatory enforcement associated with the Federal Endangered Species Act and compliance with non-point source impacts from agriculture under Sections 303 and 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. **RCPP Funding: \$7,091,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2022**

- ***Three Sisters Irrigation District (TSID) Innovation*** - TSID in the Deschutes Basin, Oregon, with government, private industry and nonprofit partners will implement multiple innovative projects to mitigate drought, improve water quality/quantity and improve fish habitat as part of the Whychus Creek Collaborative Conservation Project. The project includes the completion of piping Watson McKenzie Main Canal, resulting in the conservation of 800 acre-feet of annual canal seepage loss. The on-farm component of this project will encompass 61 projects, over 1500 acres, in the Upper District, allowing farmers to pipe private laterals, thereby providing access to pressurized water from the District's pipeline. Pressurized water will eliminate electrical pumps that use over 2.5 million kWh of electricity annually. A feasibility study will be conducted to determine the potential for 60 on-farm hydro net metering projects. This project will allow TSID to mitigate drought by piping the entire District.  
**RCPP Funding: \$990,604, Project Timeline: 2017-2022**

OWRC also continues to support funding for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), in accordance with the 2018 Farm Bill. As demonstrated by the huge demand for RCPP funding, programs like EQIP need to be funded for investment in conservation projects. It is essential the EQIP have at least \$2 billion in appropriations funding if Congress would like to see widespread results. Furthermore, with numerous new and potential listings under ESA and increased water regulations under the CWA, there is a dire need for additional funding to support conservation efforts nationwide.

RCPP helps fill a funding void for multi-partner conservation projects and allows farmers to pool together and leverage the dollars invested in the off-farm project with the addition of EQIP on-farm projects. The effects of drought combined with ESA and CWA regulation has created a daunting set of circumstances for irrigated agriculture in the west. RCPP and EQIP have become an essential lifeline for farmers to adapt to drought. It is critical to increase funding for new eligible RCPP projects that maximize economic investment while benefiting the environment and alleviating some of the negative effects of drought.

### **Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program and Watershed Planning Needs**

OWRC also strongly supports the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Two of our members, Sutherlin Water Control District (SWCD) and Middle Fork Irrigation District (MFID) have dams that were built under PL-566. SWCD and MFID have received funds to begin the long and expensive process of updating their 50-year-old dams to today's standards for safety, however; both districts will need continued funding from the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program to fully update their infrastructure.

SWCD has two dams built under PL-566 and while they were built to seismic standards 50 years ago, they do not meet today's standards for earthquakes. SWCD's dams serve as multi-purpose storage for the community: providing flood control, irrigation water, municipal water and recreation. To date, SWCD has been authorized to receive funding for planning, design and construction of one of their dams and planning and design on the other. However, SWCD will still need considerable funding dollars to complete construction on the second dam.

MFID is responsible for the management and maintenance of Clear Branch Dam, a PL-566 dam within the Hood River watershed, which provides a clean, dependable water supply and distribution system for the irrigation of pears, apples, cherries and other high value crops. Rehabilitation of the dam is needed to protect the public from flooding, for access to a clean and dependable water supply, and to maintain agricultural productivity. Rehabilitation of Clear Branch Dam will improve fish passage connectivity for ESA threatened Bull Trout and improve water temperature for spawning, rearing and migration.

Once planning and design studies are complete, both MFID and SWCD will know what the costs will be to make the necessary improvements to their dams, which is currently estimated at over \$10 million for both SWCD dams and \$9.45 million for MFID. Additionally, in 2017, Senator Merkley championed increased funding within PL- 566 for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations. The program was funded at \$150 million and included projects that benefit wildlife and irrigation. These funds are available to substantially assist Central Oregon irrigators with water conservation projects that benefit spotted frog preservation while ensuring farmers and ranchers in the region get the water they need for their operations.

Considering the high costs to fix just three of the PL-566 dams, and the immense price tag of modernizing infrastructure to increase water conservation, preserve wildlife habitat and increase water reliability for farmers and ranchers, a minimum of \$200 million is needed to fund this important program. Our member districts, the farms and other water users they serve, and the communities in which they are located benefit greatly from the NRCS programs described in our testimony. NRCS programs are essential to irrigation districts in developing and implementing conservation projects that benefit the entire watershed and community.

Furthermore, conservation projects also benefit the economy through job creation and ensuring the future viability of American agriculture. Oregon's agricultural community is actively committed to water conservation programs, but those programs require robust Federal participation if the agricultural community is to be able to continue its efforts to address Oregon's water supply needs through conservation. Increasing the budget for NRCS programs is a strategic investment that will pay both environmental and economic dividends to Oregonians and America as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed FY2021 Budget for U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations Committee,  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
March 27, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is concerned about continued reductions to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Civil Works budget and is requesting appropriations for this program be at least **\$5.5 billion** in FY2021. The USACE Civil Works program addresses vital water resource needs throughout the nation, and in Oregon, the USACE Northwestern Division operates on our two largest river systems, the Columbia River and the Willamette River, as well as maintaining Oregon's coastal rivers for navigation. OWRC is concerned the FY2021 budget for the USACE Civil Works budget will be woefully inadequate to meet the growing water infrastructure needs of Oregon and our nation. Increased funding would help support and leverage collaborative state level planning efforts by USACE in Oregon and nationwide.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate and manage complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

Our members across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates local communities' work together to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. The two largest river systems in Oregon (the Columbia River and the Willamette River) are managed by USACE and play a vital role in providing not only water supplies for agriculture, but also ports and passage for transporting food and fiber globally, flood protection for communities, fish and wildlife benefits, hydropower production, and recreation. Additional funding for the Civil Works budget is needed to ensure USACE has the necessary resources to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs of those systems, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the farmers and ranchers who produce food and fiber for our nation.

**FY2021 Appropriations**

We recognize we must make strategic investments with scarce resources. The USACE Civil Works program is a perfect example of a budget that should have funding increased because the water infrastructure it encompasses directly contributes to the economy as well protecting public safety and the environment. The Civil Works program includes the development, management and restoration of water resources related to supply, navigability, flood control, hydropower, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat across the nation. OWRC feels strongly USACE needs

substantially increased funding to provide critical repairs on our nation's aging water infrastructure to prevent catastrophic failure, as well as address routine operations and maintenance on other infrastructure before it becomes irreparable.

### **Willamette Basin Reservoir Study**

OWRC is currently collaborating with a broad water resources constituency to explore options related to the potential reallocation of stored water in the Willamette Basin dams operated by the USACE. The Portland District of the USACE Northwestern Division operates 13 dams and reservoirs in the Willamette Basin, with a combined storage capacity of over 1.6 million acre-feet. The dams were constructed primarily to protect downstream communities from flooding but also store and release water for irrigation, hydropower generation, water quality, fish and wildlife flows, and recreation. Currently, only a small portion of the stored water is under contract for irrigation (through the US Bureau of Reclamation) and there is not a specific amount of space allocated for a specific use in the reservoirs.

Since the construction of the dams in the 1930s, Oregon has seen an increase in population, which in turn has spurred increased development, agriculture and a whole host of new demands on the reservoirs. Municipal water entities would like access to available stored water to better meet drinking water needs for growing communities as well as businesses such as the high-tech industry. Additionally, there are fish and wildlife species in the river system listed under the Endangered Species Act and related ecosystem restoration needs not contemplated when the facilities were constructed. As a result, there is strong interest within Oregon to continue the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study and determine how the reservoirs can best help meet the myriad of current and future water demands in the Willamette Basin.

The State of Oregon, through the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), has been working cooperatively with USACE for several years and has provided a 50% funding match (up to \$1.5 million) related to the study. USACE has thus far met its internal deadlines for demonstrating progress, including signing of the Chief's Report. The report still needs to be reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for finalization before being sent to the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for possible inclusion in a Water Resources Development Act.

However, just recently a lawsuit and request for preliminary injunction was filed in March 2020 alleging that the USACE proposed reallocation of water stored in the Willamette River Project imperils endangered salmon and steelhead. There is uncertainty about how this litigation will impact the Willamette Reservoir reallocation process, but it is still important to continue discussions between USACE, the State of Oregon, and the diverse group of stakeholders who remain committed to a balanced outcome to meet current and future agricultural, municipal/industrial, and fish and wildlife needs. OWRC would like to see continued funding to support ongoing efforts related to the study included in the USACE Civil Works FY2021 budget and the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study incorporated into the USACE FY2021 work plan.

### **Planning Assistance to States**

OWRC strongly supports providing funding for states to undertake planning activities to meet their water needs. Oregon is the model for watershed planning and does not need a new federal agency or Executive Branch office to oversee planning, however, federal funding and technical assistance is needed. Planning activities are conducted through local watershed councils, volunteer-driven organizations that work with local, state and federal agencies, economic and environmental interests, agricultural, industrial and municipal water users, local landowners, tribes, and other members of the community. There are over 60 individual watershed councils in Oregon that are already deeply engaged in watershed planning and restoration activities. Watershed planning in Oregon formally began in 1995 with the development of the Oregon Plan for Salmon Recovery and Watershed Enhancement, a statewide strategy developed in response to the federal listing of several fish species. This strategy led to the creation of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), a state agency and policy oversight board that funds and promotes voluntary and collaborative efforts that “help create and maintain healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies” in 1999.

Additionally, OWRC has been an active participant and supporter of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) adopted by the Oregon Water Resources Commission in August 2012 and updated in December 2017. The IWRS continues to be an important step forward in planning for the various water needs of Oregon, but there is much more work to be done and little funding to implement. Providing funding for state-level planning activities will help support important efforts like the IWRS, and maximize the leveraging of state and federal resources, as well as providing viable models for other states to replicate. This approach will help leverage scarce financial resources at both the state and federal level while promoting cooperation and collaborative solutions to complex water resources challenges.

### **Additional Funding Programs**

OWRC is encouraged by the recent additions to the USACE Civil Works program including funding for climate change response, dam safety and earthquake hazard reduction; however, programs as important as these should receive even more funding. Additional funding is needed to support and leverage state efforts to identify and address earthquake hazards. Oregon faces the risk of a catastrophic earthquake from the Cascadia Subduction Zone and the State is in the early stages of planning and mitigating to improve seismic resiliency. It is uncertain when or how devastating the earthquake could be, but it is clear there would be broad impacts, particularly since most infrastructure was constructed prior to the discovery of the fault and does not meet current seismic standards. Aging water infrastructure is particularly vulnerable and there is a significant need for financial and technical assistance to upgrade reservoirs and other key facilities. Without increased earthquake preparedness and dam safety funding, Oregon cannot mitigate the potential damage. We encourage the Senate to further fund these programs to effectively prepare the states for earthquakes and prevent widespread devastation to people and property.

Additionally, like many other Western states, Oregon has been experiencing more frequent and severe drought conditions. 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. Impacts from prolonged drought take time to recover from 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. We know from our experience working with our state agency and partner organizations in Oregon that funding for planning, feasibility, and implementation of projects to increase drought preparedness and resiliency is a cornerstone to an economically, socially and environmentally sound approach for a sustainable water future.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$5.5 billion for the USACE Civil Works budget for FY2021. The critical nature of the water infrastructure services the USACE provides requires a budget that matches the seriousness of the national need and the importance of the water supply, navigation, public safety, and other natural resources benefits it provides. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY2021 budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Phone: 503-363-0121  
Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

## **COALITION SUPPORTING USGS STREAMGAGE NETWORKS & MODERNIZATION**

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Chairman  
Senator Tom Udall, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
**Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2021**

March 25, 2020

**Summary of Coalition's Requested increases for FY21:**  
**Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M**  
**Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M**  
**NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M**

Dear Senator Murkowski and Senator Udall:

As leaders in the undersigned organizations, we urge your support to enable the US Geological Survey (USGS), a Bureau in the Department of Interior (DOI), to fully support its streamgaging networks. These vital networks, managed within the USGS Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, provide critical and life-saving information and serve the national interest with continuous streamflow information at over 8,400 locations. Additions to these networks are needed to adequately manage the Nation's critical water supplies and infrastructure. The members of our organizations rely on the streamgage data and science that USGS produces and many of us represent active, cost-share partners in funding the data collection that Congress and the federal agencies require.

Information from these valuable streamgages are utilized by emergency responders, water supply managers, water quality administrators, recreationists, consulting engineers, and many others in forecasting and response during floods, droughts, and other extreme events, design of bridges and other infrastructure, energy generation, management of federal lands, design and operation of federal reservoirs and navigation infrastructure. These networks provide critical information to other bureaus of the DOI and to the U.S. Corps of Engineers, NOAA, EPA, USDA, and other federal agencies, as well as providing information essential to Congressional oversight and revision of many federal laws, including the Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and many interstate compacts and international treaties.

**Federal Priority Streamgage (FPS) Network** (formerly referred to as the National Streamflow Information Program, "NSIP"): was authorized by Congress in 2009, to operate and maintain a stable "federal backbone" network of streamgages to meet five specific national needs for streamflow information at (1) interstate and international boundaries, (2) National Weather Service flood forecast sites, (3) outflows of major river basins, (4) "sentinel watersheds," needed to evaluate and anticipate the potential consequences of ongoing changes in American land use, water use, climate etc., and (5) national priority water-quality monitoring sites. Our national ability to collect sufficient water data at the needed locations to answer the necessary federal, state, tribal, local, business and NGO questions is seriously compromised by the insufficient funding for the FPS Network. As funding for this network

has been flat for the past 5 years, USGS will be forced to reduce, rather than increase, the gages supported by the FPS Network. Also, contemporary water management issues such as ecological flows were not considered when the original national criteria were developed for the Network. Additional funding would begin to meet these needs. Today, only 25 % of the Federal Priority Streamgages are fully funded by the federal government. The USGS is unable to complete development of the Network, as Congress directed in 2009, without additional funding. Full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network is estimated at \$125M. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M for FY21 to begin to address the critical funding shortfall for the FPS network.**

**Cooperative Matching Funds:** The USGS works with over a thousand partners nation-wide (federal, state, tribal, local, and NGO) using Cooperative Matching Funds to jointly support USGS streamgages, many of which meet the criteria of the FPS Network. This matching program, which began as a 50-50 program, has seen the federal cost-share contribution decrease from 50 % to less than 30 %. Given the ability for this program to enable and encourage the expansion of vitally needed streamgages on a two for one (or greater) cost basis, an increase over the FY20 level of \$29.6 M will allow for an expansion beyond the 5,345 streamgages currently covered under this program. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M for FY21.**

**Related Programs within the USGS Water Mission Area-- Next Generation Water Observation System (NGWOS) and Modernization of the Networks and Data Delivery:** Our coalition very much appreciates Congress' recent support of NGWOS and modernization efforts. Build-out of this innovative program will provide focused monitoring in ten basins nationwide to better calibrate modeling, thus improving the ability to estimate water supply in the nation's many ungaged areas. Additional gaging stations added in the NGWOS basins supports the goals of increasing gages nationwide under the FPS Network and through Cooperative Matching Funds. We are supportive of the modeling and predictive analytical work being developed by the USGS. A robust network of physical gages is crucial to the calibration of many models (including NOAA's National Water Model and those developed by others); however, this coalition's primary support remains directed toward adequately supporting, invigorating and expanding the real-time stream gages across the U.S. **Requested Funding Level for NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M to enable a third pilot basin to be identified and funded and to allow USGS to continue to modernize water data delivery systems that benefit all water users across the nation.**

With your help and continued support, Congress can enable the USGS to fulfill its Water Resources Mission Area goals, including working toward full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network, adequately funding the Cooperative Matching Funds for streamgaging and moving water science into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through much needed modernization upgrades.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Sue Lowry at the Interstate Council on Water Policy ([Sue@ICWP.org](mailto:Sue@ICWP.org) or 307-630-5804).

Coalition of stakeholders concerned with federal support for fundamental water data collection:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Signor</u>	<u>Title</u>
American Society of Civil Engineers	Thomas W. Smith	Secretary & Exec. Dir.
American Water Resources Association	Dresden Farrand	Executive VP/CEO
American Water Works Association	Tracy Mehan	Exec. Dir./Gov't Affairs
American Whitewater	Mark Singleton	Executive Director
Appalachian Mountain Club	Susan Arnold	VP for Conservation
Association of American State Geologists	Rich Ortt	President
Association of California Water Agencies	David Reynolds	Director/Federal Relations
Association of Clean Water Administrators	Melanie Davenport	ACWA President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies	Jennifer Mock Schaeffer	Gov't Affairs Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies	Diane VanDe Hei	CEO
Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Inc.	Lori C. Spragens	Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers	Chad Berginnis	Executive Director
Bear River Commission	Don A. Barnett	Engineer-Manager
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance	Bill Jennings	Executive Director
Cascade Water Alliance	Ray Hoffman	CEO
CDM-Smith	Timothy D. Feather	Vice President
Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority	Glenn M. Page	General Manager
Colorado River Salinity Control Forum	Don A. Barnett	Executive Director
Delaware River Basin Commission	Steven J. Tambini	Executive Director
Henry's Fork Foundation	Brandon Hoffner	Executive Director
Idaho Rivers United	Nic Nelson	Executive Director
Idaho Water Users Association	Paul L. Arrington	Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin	Michael Nardolilli	Executive Director
Interstate Council on Water Policy	Amy Shallcross	ICWP Chair
Kansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Comm.	Earnie Gilder	Federal Chair
KISTERS North America, Inc.	Becca Emery	Business Develop. Mngr.
Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Katherine Zitsch	Director
Montana DNRC	John E. Tubbs	Director
Nat'l. Assoc. Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies	Susan Gilson	Executive Director
National Drought Mitigation Center	Dr. Mark Svoboda	Director
National Hydrologic Warning Council	Bruce Rindahl	President
National Hydropower Association	Malcolm Woolf	President and CEO
National Society of Professional Surveyors	Curtis Sumner	Executive Director
National Water Resources Association	Ian Lyle	Executive Vice President
National Water Supply Alliance	Dave Mitamura	Executive Director
National Wildlife Federation	Melissa Samet	Sr. Water Res. Counsel
Nebraska DNR	Jesse Bradley	Interim Director
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Comm.	Susan J. Sullivan	Executive Director
Ohio R. Valley Water Sanitation Commission	Richard Harrison	Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board	Julie Cunningham	Executive Director
Oregon Water Resources Congress	April Snell	Executive Director
Red River Compact Commission	Sue Lowry	Federal Chairman
Republican River Compact Commission	Jesse Bradley	Nebraska Commissioner
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut	Alicea Charamut	Executive Director
Susquehanna River Basin Commission	Drew Dehoff	Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy	Jimmy Hague	Sr. Water Policy Adv
Tri-State Water Resource Coalition	Gail Melgren	Executive Director
Trout Unlimited	Steve Moyer	VP/Gov't Affairs
Upper Colorado River Commission	Amy Haas	Exec. Director/Secretary

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Signor</u>	<u>Title</u>
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Kirsten Wallace	Executive Director
Water Environment Federation	Walter Marlowe	Executive Director
West Virginia Rivers Coalition	Angie Rosser	Executive Director
Western Landowners Alliance	Lesli Allison	Executive Director
Western States Water Council	Tony Willardson	Executive Director
Wyoming Water Association	Cory Toye	President
Xylem Analytics	Timothy A. Grooms	Marketing Director
Yellowstone River Compact Commission	Jan Langel	Montana Commissioner

Copy: Appropriations Subcommittee Members  
Secretary of the Interior  
Director, OMB  
Director, USGS

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
March 18, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is highly supportive of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program (CWSRF) and is requesting appropriations for this program be increased to at least **\$2.5 billion** in FY2021. The CWSRF is an effective loan program that addresses critical water infrastructure needs while benefitting the environment, local communities, and the economy.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production.

**FY 2021 Appropriations**

We recognize our country must make strategic investments with scarce resources. The CWSRF is a perfect example of the type of program that should have funding increased because it creates jobs while benefitting the environment and is an efficient return on taxpayer investment. CWSRF projects provide much needed construction and professional services jobs, particularly in rural areas facing economic hardship. Moreover, as a loan program, it is a wise investment that allows local communities to leverage their limited resources and address critical infrastructure needs that would otherwise be unmet.

In Oregon, the CWSRF is administered by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), who responsibly maintains the program through repaid loans, interest, fees, and available federal capitalization grants. According to EPA, for every \$1 of federal capitalization funding, \$3 worth of assistance is provided, leveraging available funds to maximize benefits for local communities, the environment, and the economy. Unfortunately, available funding for water infrastructure projects continues to be woefully insufficient to meet the growing water infrastructure funding needs in Oregon and nationwide.

Nationally, there are large and growing critical water infrastructure needs. In EPA's most recent needs assessment, "Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment: Sixth Report to Congress" and "The Clean Watersheds Needs Survey 2012: Report to Congress," the estimated funding need is \$472.6 billion (in 2015 dollars) to maintain and improve the nation's drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years, and \$271 billion (in 2012 dollars) for wastewater infrastructure needs, respectively. This estimate includes \$6.2 billion for drinking water infrastructure in Oregon alone. Funding for the CWSRF needs to be incrementally increased to support water infrastructure projects that are addressing these critical needs.

## **Background of CWSRF Usage by Oregon Irrigation Districts**

Over the course of the program's 30-year history in Oregon, several OWRC member districts have successfully used CWSRF for projects that improve water quality and water quantity associated with water delivery diversions, canals and pipelines throughout the state. OWRC and our members are highly supportive of the CWSRF, including promoting the program to our members and annually submitting federal appropriations testimony in support of increased funding for the CWSRF. We believe it is an important funding tool irrigation districts and other water suppliers are using for innovative piping projects that provide multiple environmental and economic benefits.

Numerous irrigation districts and other water suppliers need to pipe currently open canals, which significantly reduces sediment, improves water temperature, and provides other water quality benefits to rivers and streams. Piping immediately improves the efficiency of the water delivery system and helps increase available water supplies for fish and irrigators alike. These projects also decrease energy consumption (from reduced pumping) and have opportunities for generating renewable energy, primarily through in-conduit hydropower. However, the lack of robust funding for these types of worthwhile projects has created increased uncertainty for potential borrowers regarding whether adequate funding will be available in future years. CWSRF is often an integral part of an overall package of local, state and federal funding that necessitates a stronger level of assurance loan funds will be available for planned water infrastructure projects. Reductions in CWSRF appropriations could lead to loss of grant funding and delay or derail beneficial projects irrigation districts have been developing for years.

The success Oregon districts have had in using the loan program to design and implement multi-beneficial projects has led to increased applications to the CWSRF. Now irrigation districts are once again eligible for a key funding element, principal forgiveness (which was reinstated with the passage of the WIIN Act in 2016 and related state rulemaking in 2017), and we expect to see even more interest in the program. OWRC is hopeful there will be enough funding available to complete projects that will not only benefit the environment and the patrons served by the water delivery system, but also benefit the economy.

## **CWSRF Needs in Oregon**

The appropriations for the CWSRF program over the past few years has been far short of what is needed to address critical water infrastructure needs in Oregon and across the nation. This has led to fewer water infrastructure projects, and therefore a reduction in improvements to water quality and water quantity. However, OWRC is pleased to see a trend of modest increases in appropriations after several years of decreased funding and hope to see this trend continue as infrastructure needs have become more expensive and even more time critical. DEQ's most recent "Proposed Intended Use Plan Update #2 - State Fiscal Year 2020" includes 29 loan applications for a total of \$215,328,922 in requested funding. Currently, the loan program has \$217,419,874 available to lend for state fiscal year 2020.

The following irrigation district projects are currently ranked by DEQ in the top three by overall score and also meet the Green Project Reserve requirement. Increased funding will help catalyze many more projects like the ones below in Oregon and throughout the nation.

### **Lone Pine Irrigation District (Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties) \$2,000,000**

Sec. 319, Design and Construction, LPID Irrigation Modernization Project. This project will modernize district-owned canals and laterals to conserve water, improve operational efficiency, reduce electrical and energy costs, reduce O&M for farmers through decreased pumping and improve habitat in the Deschutes River. The project will achieve these goals by piping all the district's open canals using HDPE and steel pipe. The existing suspension bridge over the Crooked River is in disrepair and a new structure is needed to convey the irrigation water across the river. The district will replace the bridge with a siphon under the river.

### **Middle Fork Irrigation District (Hood River County) \$20,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Clear Branch Dam Rehabilitation and Coe Branch Pipeline. The district will implement multiple projects to improve water quality and quantity associated with its irrigation diversions in the Middle Fork Hood River watershed. Specific projects include: installing a new deep water outlet and improving fish passage in Laurance Lake; installing new irrigation pipe to alleviate impacts from current irrigation system and addressing return flows from the irrigation system; improving the spillway at the Clear Branch Dam; and improving irrigation efficiency by district patrons.

### **Swalley Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$16,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Irrigation Modernization Project. This irrigation piping project includes the installation of pressurized pipe to eliminate seepage and evaporative loss from open ditches; flow regulating and metering devices at service connections; pressurized delivery to eliminate individual pumps system-wide; active education; and a sprinkler exchange program. Piping and pressurizing the irrigation canals will result in approximately 1.1 million kWh/year in energy conservation and conserve up to 16 cubic feet per second of water during the irrigation season.

### **Examples of Green Project Reserves in Oregon**

Oregon irrigation districts and other water suppliers are on the forefront of innovative piping projects that provide and leverage multiple benefits, including "green" infrastructure projects. Otherwise known as Green Project Reserve (GPR), DEQ is required to use at least ten percent of annual federal capitalization grants on projects that promote water and energy efficiency, are environmentally innovative, or include green infrastructure. In 2009, the first year GPR was a requirement, four Oregon irrigation districts received over \$11 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) through the CWSRF for projects which created valuable jobs while improving water quality. These four projects were essential to DEQ not only meeting, but exceeding, the minimum requirement that 20% of the total ARRA funding for the CWSRF be used for GPRs. Without the irrigation district projects, it is likely Oregon's CWSRF would not have qualified for ARRA funding.

In 2019, four GPR projects were financed by DEQ for a total of \$13 million, far exceeding EPA's minimum requirement of \$1.8 million for such projects in Oregon. Of those four funded projects, three were irrigation district projects that met several categories of the GPR requirements related to improved water and energy efficiency. Providing increased appropriations for the CWSRF program will help implement more multi-benefit projects like these in Oregon and across the nation.

**Central Oregon Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$2,000,000 (\$20,000,000 total)**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Smith Rock and King Way Project. The district's multi-phase project will pipe several miles of the 26-mile Pilot Butte Canal open canal system as well as several miles of the 52-mile lateral irrigation canal system. Goals of the project include: habitat enhancement through allocation of water savings to in-stream water rights, reduction in risks to public safety from open irrigation canals, support for existing agricultural uses through water supply reliability, improvement to financial stability through reduced operation and maintenance costs and increased energy generation from micro-hydro, energy conservation, and a reduction of on-farm costs associated with on-farm pumping.

**Tumalo Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$2,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Feed Canal Project. The district will complete construction of a large portion of the Tumalo Feed Canal, enclosing 8,750 length-feet of the current open conveyance system in pipe, eliminating the existing major seepage loss and returning 2.92 cubic feet per second of water to Tumalo Creek and 787.14 acre-feet of water to Crescent Creek.

**Dee Irrigation District (Hood River County) \$1,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Distribution System Pressurization Project. The district will improve irrigation water efficiency, reduce energy consumption and improve water quality. The project will replace old pipes with a fully pressurized system, thereby eliminating overflows and individual pumps. Pressure head to the system will be provided by a new high-efficiency pump station and each individual patron will be metered. This project will leave water in the West Fork of Hood River, which supports multiple ESA-listed species, and will increase salmon spawning and juvenile rearing habitat, as well as improve fish passage. The increased streamflow will have temperature benefits while the elimination of overflows will reduce the amount of sediment and other materials that are discharged into the river.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, we are strongly supportive of increased appropriations to the CWSRF program, allowing Oregon's DEQ to continue make targeted loans that address Clean Water Act issues and improve water quality while incentivizing innovative water management solutions that benefit local communities, agricultural economies, and the environment. This voluntary approach creates and promotes cooperation and collaborative solutions to complex water resources challenges. We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$2.5 billion for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund for FY2021.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Phone: 503-363-0121  
Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
March 18, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Restoration  
Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is writing to express its strong support for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) program and is requesting **\$15 million** in FY2021, which is the current authorized amount. The FRIMA program is an essential cost-share funding program that helps water users and fishery agencies better protect sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species while ensuring water supply delivery to farms and communities.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

**FY2021 Appropriations**

The FRIMA program meets a critical need in fishery protection and restoration, complimenting other programs through USFWS. Fish passage and fish screen installations are a vital component to fishery protection with several benefits:

- Keep sensitive, threatened and endangered fish out of canals and water delivery systems
- Allow fish to be safely bypassed around reservoirs and other infrastructure
- Reduce water quality risks to fish species

There are over one hundred irrigation districts and other special districts in Oregon that provide water supplies to over one million acres of irrigated cropland in the state. Almost all these districts are affected by either state or federal Endangered Species Act listings of salmon, steelhead, bull trout or other sensitive, threatened or endangered species. The design and installation of fish screens and fish passage facilities to protect the myriad of fish species is often cost-prohibitive for individual districts to implement without outside funding sources.

Oregon irrigation districts anticipate at least \$25 million in funding is needed to meet current fish passage and fish screen needs in our state. Limited cost-share funds are available from the Oregon Watershed Enhanced Board (OWEB), but the primary cost-share for fish screen and fish passage projects has been provided by the districts and their water users. Projects include construction of new fish screens and fish passage facilities as well as significant upgrades of existing facilities to meet new requirements (new species or science) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service and the USFWS. Upgrades are often needed to modernize facilities with new technologies that provide better protection for fish species as well as reduced maintenance and increased lifespan for the operator.

## **Background of the Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program**

FRIMA, originally enacted in November 2000, created a federal partnership program incentivizing voluntary fish screen and fish passage improvements for water withdrawal projects in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and western Montana. The funding went to local governments for construction of fish screens and fish passage facilities and is matched with non-federal funding. Irrigation districts and other local governments that divert water for irrigation accessed the funding directly, while individual irrigators accessed funding through their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), which are local governments affiliated with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The original legislation in 2000 (PL.106-502) was supported and requested by the Pacific Northwest Partnership, a coalition of local governmental entities in the four Northwest states, including OWRC. The FRIMA legislation authorized \$25 million annually, to be divided equally among the four states from 2001 to 2012, which was when the original authorization expired. The actual funding appropriated to the FRIMA program (through Congressional write-ins) ranged from \$1 million to \$8 million, well short of the \$25 million authorized and far short of what is needed to address fish passage and screening needs across the region. However, that small amount of funding was used to leverage other funds and assisted the region in making measurable progress towards installing fish screens and fish passage critical to protecting and restoring populations of sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species.

FRIMA funding was channeled through USFWS to state fishery agencies in the four states, and distributed using an application and approval process based on a ranking system implemented uniformly among the states, including the following criteria: Fish restoration benefits, cost effectiveness, and feasibility of planned structure. All projects provided improved fish passage or fish protection at water diversion structures and benefitted native fish species in the area, including several state or federally listed species. Projects were also subject to applicable state and federal requirements for project construction and operation.

FRIMA was reauthorized as part of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN) of 2016. However, a fifth state, California, was also added as an eligible FRIMA cost-share recipient and the program was only reauthorized for \$15 million, well short of the estimated \$500 million in fish screening and passage needs in the Pacific Northwest alone. Now that the program has been reauthorized, it is imperative the program receive appropriations so all five states can better leverage state and local funding to meet their fish passage and screening needs.

## **Program Benefits**

FRIMA projects provide immediate protection for fish and fills a large unmet need in the west for cost-share assistance with fish screening and fish passage installation and improvements. Compared to other recovery strategies, installation of fish screens and fish passage has the highest assurance for increasing populations of sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, the construction of these facilities have minimal impact on water delivery operations, and projects are done cooperatively using methods well accepted by landowners and rural communities.

Funding of the FRIMA program has catalyzed cooperative partnerships and innovative projects that provide immediate and long-term benefits to irrigators, fishery agencies, and local communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. This program is also a wise investment, with past projects contributing more than the required match and leveraging on average over one dollar for each federal dollar invested. FRIMA provides for a maximum federal cost-share of 65%, with the applicant's cost-share at 35% along with on-going maintenance and support of the structure for passage or screening purposes. Applicants operate the facilities and state agencies review and monitor the projects.

### **Oregon Projects & Benefits**

Twenty-six fish screen or fish passage projects in Oregon were previously funded using FRIMA for part of the project financing. These projects have led to:

- Installation of screens at seventeen diversions or irrigation pumps
- Removal or modification of twelve fish passage barriers
- Three-hundred sixty-five miles of surface waters re-opened to safe fish passage

In addition, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has used some of the FRIMA funding to develop an inventory of needed fish screens and passages in the state. Grants ranged from just under \$6,000 to \$400,000 in size with a local match averaging 64% of the project costs, well over the amount required under the Act (35%). In other words, each federal dollar invested in the FRIMA program generates a local investment of just over one dollar for the protection of fish species in the Pacific Northwest.

The following are examples of how Oregon has effectively utilized FRIMA money. Additional examples of projects in other states are available from USFWS at:

<https://www.fws.gov/pacific/Fisheries/reportpub/Documents/FRIMA%20Accomplishments%20Report%202002-2012.pdf>

**Santiam Water Control District:** Fish screen project on a large 1050 cubic feet per second (cfs) multipurpose water diversion project on the Santiam River (Willamette Basin) near Stayton, Oregon. Partners are the Santiam Water Control District, ODFW, Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, and the City of Stayton. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$400,000** leveraged a **\$1,200,000** total project cost. Species benefited included winter steelhead, spring Chinook, rainbow trout, and cutthroat trout.

**South Fork Little Butte Creek:** Fish screen and fish passage project on a 65 cfs irrigation water diversion in the Rogue River Basin near Medford, Oregon. Partners are the Medford Irrigation District and ODFW. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$372,000** leveraged a **\$580,000** total project cost. Species benefited included listed summer and winter steelhead, Coho salmon, and cutthroat trout.

**Running Y (Geary Diversion):** Fish screen project on a 60 cfs irrigation water diversion in the upper Klamath Basin near Klamath Falls, Oregon. Partners are the Wocus Drainage District, ODFW, and Jeld-Wen Ranches. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$44,727** leveraged a total project cost of **\$149,000**. Species benefited included listed red-band trout and short-nosed sucker.

**Lakeshore Gardens:** Fish screen project on a 2 cfs irrigation water diversion in the upper Klamath Basin near Klamath Falls, Oregon. Partners are the Lakeshore Gardens Drainage District and ODFW. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$5,691** leveraged a total project cost of **\$18,970**. Species benefited included red-band trout, short-nosed sucker and Lost River sucker.

### **Conclusion**

Providing funding for the FRIMA program fills a vital funding gap for fish screens and fish passage projects that are needed to protect and restore sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species, which in turn benefits the economy, local communities, and the environment. Eligible FRIMA funded projects are ready for construction and will provide immediate habitat benefits for fish as well as jobs and economic revitalization for local communities. Dollar-for-dollar, providing screening and fish passage at diversions is one of the most cost-effective uses of restoration dollars, creating fishery protection at relative low cost, with low risk and significant benefits.

The return of a robustly funded FRIMA program will once again catalyze cooperative partnerships and innovative projects that provide immediate and long-term benefits to irrigators, fishery agencies, and local communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. We respectfully request an appropriation of \$15 million for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act program for FY2021.

Sincerely,

April Snell  
Executive Director  
795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301  
Phone: 503-363-012

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress, Submitted to  
the United States House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Energy and Water  
Development and Related Agencies, March 30, 2020

**RE: U.S. Department of the Interior's FY2021 Budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) continues to support increased funding for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) Water and Related Resources program and requests that a minimum of \$1.5 billion be included in the FY2021 Budget. We remain concerned the proposed FY2021 budget for the Water and Related Resources program, and particularly for the WaterSMART Initiative, will be woefully insufficient to meet the diverse water supply and infrastructure needs in the 17 Western States that Reclamation serves. Additional funding will help leverage other resources and collaborative partnerships and support increased coordination between other federal agencies on water related challenges.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities. About one-half of our members are in Reclamation Projects and most of our members have contracts with Reclamation or have been awarded grants under the WaterSMART program.

Our members from across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates that local communities' work together

to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. Funding collaborative initiatives, like the ones housed under Reclamation's Water and Related Resources programs, are valuable tools to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs throughout basins, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the agricultural economy that produces food and fiber for our nation.

### **WaterSMART Initiative**

OWRC strongly supports Reclamation's ongoing WaterSMART Initiative and increased funding for the WaterSMART Grants and Water Conservation Field Services Program (WCFSP)—the two programs used the most by Oregon's irrigation districts to support water conservation activities. These programs are an important part of the overall funding package for water resources projects collaboratively developed by local communities, supported with local and state funding, and designed to meet those communities' unique needs while still meeting the goal of water conservation.

The WCFSP is a key component in supporting irrigation districts' and similar water delivery systems' water conservation efforts. The WCFSP has provided a breadth of technical assistance to irrigation districts and provided partial funding for materials used to pipe and line canals, measurement and other technology, and water conservation plans—all supporting water conservation efforts being implemented by these districts. Providing increased funding for WCFSP projects will yield immediate and cost-effective water conservation measures in all 17 Western States.

Additionally, we believe the management of the WCFSP should remain with the Regional Offices in order to retain the close connection between Reclamation and Project managers and ensure Reclamation's resources are used to best support the management of its Projects. The WCFSP is one of the Reclamation services most appreciated by our members. The

regional staff, and particularly the local area office staff, understand the unique operating and delivery challenges of the various Projects, and therefore provide very meaningful support to the managers of those Projects.

### ***WaterSMART Grants***

WaterSMART cost-share grants have supported Oregon districts' efforts to improve water delivery systems, conserve water, and implement innovative projects to meet the water needs in Oregon. These projects have been a key ingredient to the districts' cooperative efforts with other stakeholders in their respective river basins to address in-stream, water quality, and water supply needs of their basins, without reducing the amount of land to which the districts deliver water, and avoiding regulatory actions by federal or state agencies. There continues to be more applicants than available funding and additional financial resources are needed to enable local water suppliers to continue their work to conserve water and help meet the Secretary's water conservation goal. With a return of over \$5 for every \$1 of federal investment, and non-federal match generally exceeding the required amount, this program far surpasses the results of other partnerships between the federal government and local project sponsors. The following projects were awarded funding in late 2019 and early 2020 and are examples of how the WaterSMART Initiative is being used in Oregon:

**Klamath Irrigation District, C-4-a Canal Lining/Piping Project** - The District will convert 1.5 miles of the currently open Canal to 3,000 feet of Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer lining and 5,000 feet of high-density polyethylene pipe. The project is expected to result in an annual water savings of 664 acre-feet which is currently lost to seepage, evaporation, and operational spills. The project is expected to improve lake levels to benefit fish species such as the endangered Shortnose Sucker, and to provide a potential late season supply for other water users

in times of shortage. In addition, conserved water may be available for the fall waterfowl migration at the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. **Water and Energy Efficiency**

**Grant: \$210,650 Total Project Cost: \$421,301**

**Middle Fork Irrigation District, Coe Branch Pipeline and Irrigation Efficiency Project** The

District will install a high-density polyethylene pipe from its existing diversion on Coe Creek to an existing settling pond to provide clean irrigation water to its users. When sedimentation worsens in Coe Creek, the District must meet irrigation demand with water from Laurance Reservoir and its tributaries. The District will use the settling pond to remove glacial sediment from the water before it is delivered to irrigators, thereby avoiding diversions from Laurance Lake. By more efficiently and effectively removing sediment, the project will also allow water users to install high-efficiency micro-sprinklers. **Water and Energy Efficiency Grant:**

**\$266,600 Total Project Cost: \$1,460,400**

**North Unit Irrigation District, Optimized Diversion Precision at Pump Station -** The

District will install a Variable Frequency Drive on one of nine pumps that divert water from the Crooked River into the District's main canal. This project will improve the operational flexibility of the District by matching the pump intake rate with the flow rate of the river, ultimately allowing the District to access an additional 3,500 acre-feet per year, in a manner consistent with state water law requirements. **Drought Resiliency Grant: \$122,485 Total Project Cost:**

**\$244,970**

**Ochoco Irrigation District, System Optimization & Canal Piping Project -** The District will

convert 1,790 linear feet of unlined open canal to a closed piped system. This project will increase water delivery efficiency and reduce tailwater spills. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency**

**Grant: \$75,000 Total Project Cost: \$182,878**

**Talent Irrigation District, Talent Main Canal Shotcrete Project** - The District will line 960 feet of its Main Canal with shotcrete. This project will conserve water by reducing leaks and seepage, thereby providing a more reliable supply during below-average water years. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grant: \$33,143 Total Project Cost: \$66,286**

**Westland Irrigation District, Integrated Flow Measurement & Control Gate Automation Project** - The District will install an automated flume gate near the bifurcation on its Main Canal into two separate canals. The flume gate will be integrated with the current Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system and will allow the District to improve delivery efficiencies through better management of flows into the two canals. **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Grant: \$35,294 Total Project Cost: \$70,587**

Further innovative projects like the ones above could be developed and implemented in Oregon if more funding is made available through the WaterSMART Initiative. Additionally, OWRC would like to see the funding cap increased from \$1 million to \$5 million in areas where there are known endangered, threatened or vulnerable species. By increasing the funding cap, Reclamation would have the ability to fund projects aimed at improving species habitat at a higher level, allowing for these important projects to move forward.

We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$1.5 billion for Reclamation's Water and Related Resources program for FY2021. Providing increased funding for the WaterSMART Initiative is a wise investment that will yield benefits for our nation's economy, environment, and communities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY2021 budget for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation.

Sincerely, April Snell, Executive Director

Address: 795 Winter Street, NE Salem, OR 97301

April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Testimony submitted to the United States House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
March 30, 2020

**RE: FY 2021 Budget for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) strongly supports funding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs. It is crucial the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has adequate resources and we request a minimum of \$300 million to leverage partnerships and tackle the complex natural resources conservation issues facing the nation. Furthermore, we are strongly supportive of coordinated federal agency watershed planning, and request funding for the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program (under PL-566), at a minimum of \$200 million in FY 2021.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

Our members from across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates local communities' work together to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. Funding programs, like the ones housed under the USDA NRCS programs, are valuable tools to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs throughout all our basins, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the agricultural economy that produces food and fiber for our nation.

**RCPP Benefits & Needs**

OWRC strongly supports robust funding for NRCS programs, particularly the RCPP, which is a critical tool for districts and other agricultural water suppliers in developing and implementing water and energy conservation projects in Oregon. While we understand the need to streamline federal agency activities and programs, it is our hope essential programs like the RCPP continue to receive the additional funding that is still needed to meet program demands. In the past, related NRCS programs, such as the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), have been highly successful in developing cooperative approaches for federal, state and local interests to address Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Clean Water Act (CWA) issues in watershed basins and sub basins. Those programs helped catalyze conservation efforts that live on in the RCPP today. RCPP currently has over 2,000 partners engaged in locally led conservation efforts that help implement collaborative basin-level solutions and reduce detrimental legal action, resulting in better outcomes for all.

Federal support of water conservation activities funded through NRCS programs, including the RCPP, is essential to the conservation of our natural resources and critical to protecting our food, energy and water supply. Since 2014, RCPP has invested \$1 billion in over 375 projects across all fifty states and Puerto Rico. That \$1 billion has leveraged an additional \$2 billion from state and local partners for a total of \$3 billion invested in water conservation projects. Among those are Oregon projects that will address water quality and drought like those described below. Irrigation districts in Oregon are the model of successful RCPP projects that “innovate, leverage additional contributions, offer impactful solutions and engage more participants.” More projects like this could be developed and implemented in Oregon and throughout the nation with additional federal support through the RCPP.

- ***East Fork Irrigation District (EFID) Watershed Restoration*** – EFID, with a diverse set of partners in the Hood River Watershed in the Columbia River Basin, will focus on a top-priority water conservation and fish habitat project in the Lower East Fork Hood River. EFID and its partners will construct Phase 1 of the Eastside Lateral pipeline project, assist agricultural producers with approximately 400 acres of on-farm water conservation practices and educate producers and farm workers on the latest irrigation water management techniques. The project will also restore one mile of spawning and rearing habitat on the East Fork Hood River for threatened steelhead, spring Chinook, and coho. The project will increase irrigation water reliability for high value food crops, improve resilience to drought, and restore instream habitat for ESA listed species.  
**RCPP Funding: \$2,033,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2022**
- ***The Wallowa Lake Irrigation Modernization Project, Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA)*** – This project will address water quantity, water quality, and inadequate habitat resource concerns in the Prairie Creek area of Wallowa County, Oregon. This project proposes to pipe 11.8 miles of private ditches, install water control structures/fish screens on newly piped ditches and install up to ten new sprinkler systems to increase on-farm conveyance and application efficiency. The actions will improve water conveyance and application efficiency, reduce fish entrainment risk decrease return flows into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River, and decrease sediment, nutrient, and bacteria inputs into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River. FCA and its partners seek to benefit threatened or endangered populations of spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead trout and bull trout.  
**RCPP Funding: \$1,730,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2021**
- ***Lower Crooked River Strategic Restoration*** – This is a comprehensive project, led by the Crooked River Watershed Council, intended to address degraded fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and riparian plant communities over 17 miles of the Crooked River in Central Oregon. Proposed restoration activities include both instream and riparian restoration to improve habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality, and agricultural productivity. In addition, the project will reduce the threat of regulatory enforcement associated with the Federal Endangered Species Act and compliance with non-point source impacts from agriculture under Sections 303 and 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act. **RCPP Funding: \$7,091,000, Project Timeline: 2018-2022**

- ***Three Sisters Irrigation District (TSID) Innovation*** - TSID in the Deschutes Basin, Oregon, with government, private industry and nonprofit partners will implement multiple innovative projects to mitigate drought, improve water quality/quantity and improve fish habitat as part of the Whychus Creek Collaborative Conservation Project. The project includes the completion of piping Watson McKenzie Main Canal, resulting in the conservation of 800 acre-feet of annual canal seepage loss. The on-farm component of this project will encompass 61 projects, over 1500 acres, in the Upper District, allowing farmers to pipe private laterals, thereby providing access to pressurized water from the District's pipeline. Pressurized water will eliminate electrical pumps that use over 2.5 million kWh of electricity annually. A feasibility study will be conducted to determine the potential for 60 on-farm hydro net metering projects. This project will allow TSID to mitigate drought by piping the entire District.  
**RCPP Funding: \$990,604, Project Timeline: 2017-2022**

OWRC also continues to support funding for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), in accordance with the 2018 Farm Bill. As demonstrated by the huge demand for RCPP funding, programs like EQIP need to be funded for investment in conservation projects. It is essential the EQIP have at least \$2 billion in appropriations funding if Congress would like to see widespread results. Furthermore, with numerous new and potential listings under ESA and increased water regulations under the CWA, there is a dire need for additional funding to support conservation efforts nationwide.

RCPP helps fill a funding void for multi-partner conservation projects and allows farmers to pool together and leverage the dollars invested in the off-farm project with the addition of EQIP on-farm projects. The effects of drought combined with ESA and CWA regulation has created a daunting set of circumstances for irrigated agriculture in the west. RCPP and EQIP have become an essential lifeline for farmers to adapt to drought. It is critical to increase funding for new eligible RCPP projects that maximize economic investment while benefiting the environment and alleviating some of the negative effects of drought.

### **Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program and Watershed Planning Needs**

OWRC also strongly supports the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Two of our members, Sutherlin Water Control District (SWCD) and Middle Fork Irrigation District (MFID) have dams that were built under PL-566. SWCD and MFID have received funds to begin the long and expensive process of updating their 50-year-old dams to today's standards for safety, however; both districts will need continued funding from the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program to fully update their infrastructure.

SWCD has two dams built under PL-566 and while they were built to seismic standards 50 years ago, they do not meet today's standards for earthquakes. SWCD's dams serve as multi-purpose storage for the community: providing flood control, irrigation water, municipal water and recreation. To date, SWCD has been authorized to receive funding for planning, design and construction of one of their dams and planning and design on the other. However, SWCD will still need considerable funding dollars to complete construction on the second dam.

MFID is responsible for the management and maintenance of Clear Branch Dam, a PL-566 dam within the Hood River watershed, which provides a clean, dependable water supply and distribution system for the irrigation of pears, apples, cherries and other high value crops. Rehabilitation of the dam is needed to protect the public from flooding, for access to a clean and dependable water supply, and to maintain agricultural productivity. Rehabilitation of Clear Branch Dam will improve fish passage connectivity for ESA threatened Bull Trout and improve water temperature for spawning, rearing and migration.

Once planning and design studies are complete, both MFID and SWCD will know what the costs will be to make the necessary improvements to their dams, which is currently estimated at over \$10 million for both SWCD dams and \$9.45 million for MFID. Additionally, in 2017, Senator Merkley championed increased funding within PL- 566 for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations. The program was funded at \$150 million and included projects that benefit wildlife and irrigation. These funds are available to substantially assist Central Oregon irrigators with water conservation projects that benefit spotted frog preservation while ensuring farmers and ranchers in the region get the water they need for their operations.

Considering the high costs to fix just three of the PL-566 dams, and the immense price tag of modernizing infrastructure to increase water conservation, preserve wildlife habitat and increase water reliability for farmers and ranchers, a minimum of \$200 million is needed to fund this important program. Our member districts, the farms and other water users they serve, and the communities in which they are located benefit greatly from the NRCS programs described in our testimony. NRCS programs are essential to irrigation districts in developing and implementing conservation projects that benefit the entire watershed and community.

Furthermore, conservation projects also benefit the economy through job creation and ensuring the future viability of American agriculture. Oregon's agricultural community is actively committed to water conservation programs, but those programs require robust Federal participation if the agricultural community is to be able to continue its efforts to address Oregon's water supply needs through conservation. Increasing the budget for NRCS programs is a strategic investment that will pay both environmental and economic dividends to Oregonians and America as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed FY 2021 Budget for the the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress

Submitted to the United States House Appropriations Committee,

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies

March 30, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is concerned about continued reductions to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Civil Works budget and is requesting appropriations for this program be at least **\$5.5 billion** in FY2021. The USACE Civil Works program addresses vital water resource needs throughout the nation, and in Oregon, the USACE Northwestern Division operates on our two largest river systems, the Columbia River and the Willamette River, as well as maintaining Oregon's coastal rivers for navigation. OWRC is concerned the FY2021 budget for the USACE Civil Works budget will be woefully inadequate to meet the growing water infrastructure needs of Oregon and our nation. Increased funding would help support and leverage collaborative state level planning efforts by USACE in Oregon and nationwide.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate and manage complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

Our members across Oregon face challenges related to irrigation water supply reliability

and aging infrastructure. While there are common concerns and interests throughout irrigated agriculture, each basin is unique, and necessitates local communities' work together to identify their needs and develop solutions to best meet them. The two largest river systems in Oregon (the Columbia River and the Willamette River) are managed by USACE and play a vital role in providing not only water supplies for agriculture, but also ports and passage for transporting food and fiber globally, flood protection for communities, fish and wildlife benefits, hydropower production, and recreation. Additional funding for the Civil Works budget is needed to ensure USACE has the necessary resources to meet the myriad of infrastructure needs of those systems, without placing the entire burden on the backs of the farmers and ranchers who produce food and fiber for our nation.

### **FY2021 Appropriations**

We recognize we must make strategic investments with scarce resources. The USACE Civil Works program is a perfect example of a budget that should have funding increased because the water infrastructure it encompasses directly contributes to the economy as well protecting public safety and the environment. The Civil Works program includes the development, management and restoration of water resources related to supply, navigability, flood control, hydropower, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat across the nation. OWRC feels strongly USACE needs substantially increased funding to provide critical repairs on our nation's aging water infrastructure to prevent catastrophic failure, as well as address routine operations and maintenance on other infrastructure before it becomes irreparable.

### **Willamette Basin Reservoir Study**

OWRC is currently collaborating with a broad water resources constituency to explore options related to the potential reallocation of stored water in the Willamette Basin dams

operated by the USACE. The Portland District of the USACE Northwestern Division operates 13 dams and reservoirs in the Willamette Basin, with a combined storage capacity of over 1.6 million acre- feet. The dams were constructed primarily to protect downstream communities from flooding but also store and release water for irrigation, hydropower generation, water quality, fish and wildlife flows, and recreation. Currently, only a small portion of the stored water is under contract for irrigation (through the US Bureau of Reclamation) and there is not a specific amount of space allocated for a specific use in the reservoirs.

Since the construction of the dams in the 1930s, Oregon has seen an increase in population, which in turn has spurred increased development, agriculture and a whole host of new demands on the reservoirs. Municipal water entities would like access to available stored water to better meet drinking water needs for growing communities as well as businesses such as the high-tech industry. Additionally, there are fish and wildlife species in the river system listed under the Endangered Species Act and related ecosystem restoration needs not contemplated when the facilities were constructed. As a result, there is strong interest within Oregon to continue the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study and determine how the reservoirs can best help meet the myriad of current and future water demands in the Willamette Basin.

The State of Oregon, through the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), has been working cooperatively with USACE for several years and has provided a 50% funding match (up to \$1.5 million) related to the study. USACE has thus far met its internal deadlines for demonstrating progress, including signing of the Chief's Report. The report still needs to be reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for finalization before being sent to the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for possible inclusion in a Water Resources Development Act.

However, recently a lawsuit and request for preliminary injunction was filed in March 2020 alleging that the USACE proposed reallocation of water stored in the Willamette River Project imperils endangered salmon and steelhead. There is uncertainty about how this litigation will impact the Willamette Reservoir reallocation process, but it is still important to continue discussions between USACE, the State of Oregon, and the diverse group of stakeholders who remain committed to a balanced outcome to meet current and future agricultural, municipal/industrial, and fish and wildlife needs. OWRC would like to see continued funding to support ongoing efforts related to the study included in the USACE Civil Works FY2021 budget and the Willamette Basin Reservoir Study incorporated into the USACE FY2021 work plan.

### **Additional Funding Programs**

OWRC is encouraged by the recent additions to the USACE Civil Works program including funding for climate change response, dam safety and earthquake hazard reduction; however, programs as important as these should receive even more funding. Additional funding is needed to support and leverage state efforts to identify and address earthquake hazards. Oregon faces the risk of a catastrophic earthquake from the Cascadia Subduction Zone and the State is in the early stages of planning and mitigating to improve seismic resiliency. It is uncertain when or how devastating the earthquake could be, but it is clear there would be broad impacts, particularly since most infrastructure was constructed prior to the discovery of the fault and does not meet current seismic standards.

Aging water infrastructure is particularly vulnerable and there is a significant need for financial and technical assistance to upgrade reservoirs and other key facilities. Without increased earthquake preparedness and dam safety funding, Oregon cannot mitigate the

potential damage. We encourage the House to further fund these programs to effectively prepare the states for earthquakes and prevent widespread devastation to people and property.

Additionally, like many other Western states, Oregon has been experiencing more frequent and severe drought conditions. 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. Impacts from prolonged drought take time to recover from 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. We know from our experience working with our state agency and partner organizations in Oregon that funding for planning, feasibility, and implementation of projects to increase drought preparedness and resiliency is a cornerstone to an economically, socially and environmentally sound approach for a sustainable water future.

In conclusion, we respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$5.5 billion for the USACE Civil Works budget for FY2021. The critical nature of the water infrastructure services the USACE provides requires a budget that matches the seriousness of the national need and the importance of the water supply, navigation, public safety, and other natural resources benefits it provides. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the FY2021 budget for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Sincerely, April Snell, Executive Director

Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

## **COALITION SUPPORTING USGS STREAMGAGE NETWORKS & MODERNIZATION**

Congresswoman Betty McCollum, Chair  
Congressman David Joyce, Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
2363 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
**Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2021**

March 25, 2020

**Summary of Coalition's Requested increases for FY21:**  
**Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M**  
**Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M**  
**NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M**

Dear Congresswoman McCollum and Congressman Joyce:

As leaders in the undersigned organizations, we urge your support to enable the US Geological Survey (USGS), a Bureau in the Department of Interior (DOI), to fully support its streamgaging networks. These vital networks, managed within the USGS Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, provide critical and life-saving information and serve the national interest with continuous streamflow information at over 8,400 locations. Additions to these networks are needed to adequately manage the Nation's critical water supplies and infrastructure. The members of our organizations rely on the streamgage data and science that USGS produces and many of us represent active, cost-share partners in funding the data collection that Congress and the federal agencies require.

Information from these valuable streamgages are utilized by emergency responders, water supply managers, water quality administrators, recreationists, consulting engineers, and many others in forecasting and response during floods, droughts, and other extreme events, design of bridges and other infrastructure, energy generation, management of federal lands, design and operation of federal reservoirs and navigation infrastructure. These networks provide critical information to other bureaus of the DOI and to the U.S. Corps of Engineers, NOAA, EPA, USDA, and other federal agencies, as well as providing information essential to Congressional oversight and revision of many federal laws, including the Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and many interstate compacts and international treaties.

**Federal Priority Streamgage (FPS) Network** (formerly referred to as the National Streamflow Information Program, "NSIP"): was authorized by Congress in 2009, to operate and maintain a stable "federal backbone" network of streamgages to meet five specific national needs for streamflow information at (1) interstate and international boundaries, (2) National Weather Service flood forecast sites, (3) outflows of major river basins, (4) "sentinel watersheds," needed to evaluate and anticipate the potential consequences of ongoing changes in American land use, water use, climate etc., and (5) national priority water-quality monitoring sites. Our national ability to collect sufficient water data at the needed locations to answer the necessary federal, state, tribal, local, business and NGO questions is seriously compromised by the insufficient funding for the FPS Network. As funding for this network

has been flat for the past 5 years, USGS will be forced to reduce, rather than increase, the gages supported by the FPS Network. Also, contemporary water management issues such as ecological flows were not considered when the original national criteria were developed for the Network. Additional funding would begin to meet these needs. Today, only 25 % of the Federal Priority Streamgages are fully funded by the federal government. The USGS is unable to complete development of the Network, as Congress directed in 2009, without additional funding. Full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network is estimated at \$125M. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Federal Priorities Streamgages is \$27.5 M for FY21 to begin to address the critical funding shortfall for the FPS network.**

**Cooperative Matching Funds:** The USGS works with over a thousand partners nation-wide (federal, state, tribal, local, and NGO) using Cooperative Matching Funds to jointly support USGS streamgages, many of which meet the criteria of the FPS Network. This matching program, which began as a 50-50 program, has seen the federal cost-share contribution decrease from 50 % to less than 30 %. Given the ability for this program to enable and encourage the expansion of vitally needed streamgages on a two for one (or greater) cost basis, an increase over the FY20 level of \$29.6 M will allow for an expansion beyond the 5,345 streamgages currently covered under this program. **Requested Funding Level by this Coalition for Cooperative Matching Funds for Streamgage Network is \$33 M for FY21.**

**Related Programs within the USGS Water Mission Area-- Next Generation Water Observation System (NGWOS) and Modernization of the Networks and Data Delivery:** Our coalition very much appreciates Congress' recent support of NGWOS and modernization efforts. Build-out of this innovative program will provide focused monitoring in ten basins nationwide to better calibrate modeling, thus improving the ability to estimate water supply in the nation's many ungaged areas. Additional gaging stations added in the NGWOS basins supports the goals of increasing gages nationwide under the FPS Network and through Cooperative Matching Funds. We are supportive of the modeling and predictive analytical work being developed by the USGS. A robust network of physical gages is crucial to the calibration of many models (including NOAA's National Water Model and those developed by others); however, this coalition's primary support remains directed toward adequately supporting, invigorating and expanding the real-time stream gages across the U.S. **Requested Funding Level for NGWOS and Data Delivery Modernization is \$20M to enable a third pilot basin to be identified and funded and to allow USGS to continue to modernize water data delivery systems that benefit all water users across the nation.**

With your help and continued support, Congress can enable the USGS to fulfill its Water Resources Mission Area goals, including working toward full implementation of the Federal Priority Streamgage Network, adequately funding the Cooperative Matching Funds for streamgaging and moving water science into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through much needed modernization upgrades.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Sue Lowry at the Interstate Council on Water Policy ([Sue@ICWP.org](mailto:Sue@ICWP.org) or 307-630-5804).

Coalition of stakeholders concerned with federal support for fundamental water data collection:

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Signor</u>	<u>Title</u>
American Society of Civil Engineers	Thomas W. Smith	Secretary & Exec. Dir.
American Water Resources Association	Dresden Farrand	Executive VP/CEO
American Water Works Association	Tracy Mehan	Exec. Dir./Gov't Affairs
American Whitewater	Mark Singleton	Executive Director
Appalachian Mountain Club	Susan Arnold	VP for Conservation
Association of American State Geologists	Rich Ortt	President
Association of California Water Agencies	David Reynolds	Director/Federal Relations
Association of Clean Water Administrators	Melanie Davenport	ACWA President
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies	Jennifer Mock Schaeffer	Gov't Affairs Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies	Diane VanDe Hei	CEO
Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Inc.	Lori C. Spragens	Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers	Chad Berginnis	Executive Director
Bear River Commission	Don A. Barnett	Engineer-Manager
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance	Bill Jennings	Executive Director
Cascade Water Alliance	Ray Hoffman	CEO
CDM-Smith	Timothy D. Feather	Vice President
Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority	Glenn M. Page	General Manager
Colorado River Salinity Control Forum	Don A. Barnett	Executive Director
Delaware River Basin Commission	Steven J. Tambini	Executive Director
Henry's Fork Foundation	Brandon Hoffner	Executive Director
Idaho Rivers United	Nic Nelson	Executive Director
Idaho Water Users Association	Paul L. Arrington	Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin	Michael Nardolilli	Executive Director
Interstate Council on Water Policy	Amy Shallcross	ICWP Chair
Kansas-Oklahoma Arkansas River Compact Comm.	Earnie Gilder	Federal Chair
KISTERS North America, Inc.	Becca Emery	Business Develop. Mngr.
Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District	Katherine Zitsch	Director
Montana DNRC	John E. Tubbs	Director
Nat'l. Assoc. Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies	Susan Gilson	Executive Director
National Drought Mitigation Center	Dr. Mark Svoboda	Director
National Hydrologic Warning Council	Bruce Rindahl	President
National Hydropower Association	Malcolm Woolf	President and CEO
National Society of Professional Surveyors	Curtis Sumner	Executive Director
National Water Resources Association	Ian Lyle	Executive Vice President
National Water Supply Alliance	Dave Mitamura	Executive Director
National Wildlife Federation	Melissa Samet	Sr. Water Res. Counsel
Nebraska DNR	Jesse Bradley	Interim Director
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission	Susan J. Sullivan	Executive Director
Ohio R. Valley Water Sanitation Commission	Richard Harrison	Executive Director
Oklahoma Water Resources Board	Julie Cunningham	Executive Director
Oregon Water Resources Congress	April Snell	Executive Director
Red River Compact Commission	Sue Lowry	Federal Chairman
Republican River Compact Commission	Jesse Bradley	Nebraska Commissioner
Rivers Alliance of Connecticut	Alicea Charamut	Executive Director
Susquehanna River Basin Commission	Drew Dehoff	Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy	Jimmy Hague	Sr. Water Policy Adv'r
Tri-State Water Resource Coalition	Gail Melgren	Executive Director
Trout Unlimited	Steve Moyer	VP/Gov't Affairs
Upper Colorado River Commission	Amy Haas	Exec. Director/Secretary

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Signor</u>	<u>Title</u>
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Kirsten Wallace	Executive Director
Water Environment Federation	Walter Marlowe	Executive Director
West Virginia Rivers Coalition	Angie Rosser	Executive Director
Western Landowners Alliance	Lesli Allison	Executive Director
Western States Water Council	Tony Willardson	Executive Director
Wyoming Water Association	Cory Toye	President
Xylem Analytics	Timothy A. Grooms	Marketing Director
Yellowstone River Compact Commission	Jan Langel	Montana Commissioner

Copy: Appropriations Subcommittee Members

Secretary of the Interior  
Director, OMB  
Director, USGS

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
March 6, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is highly supportive of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program (CWSRF) and is requesting appropriations for this program be increased to at least **\$2.5 billion** in FY2021. The CWSRF is an effective loan program that addresses critical water infrastructure needs while benefitting the environment, local communities, and the economy.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower production.

**FY2021 Appropriations**

We recognize our country must make strategic investments with scarce resources. The CWSRF is a perfect example of the type of program that should have funding increased because it creates jobs while benefitting the environment and is an efficient return on taxpayer investment. CWSRF projects provide much needed construction and professional services jobs, particularly in rural areas facing economic hardship. Moreover, as a loan program, it is a wise investment that allows local communities to leverage their limited resources and address critical infrastructure needs that would otherwise be unmet.

In Oregon, the CWSRF is administered by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), who responsibly maintains the program through repaid loans, interest, fees, and available federal capitalization grants. According to EPA, for every \$1 of federal capitalization funding, \$3 worth of assistance is provided, leveraging available funds to maximize benefits for local communities, the environment, and the economy. Unfortunately, available funding for water infrastructure projects continues to be woefully insufficient to meet the growing water infrastructure funding needs in Oregon and nationwide.

Nationally, there are large and growing critical water infrastructure needs. In EPA's most recent needs assessment, "Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment: Sixth Report to Congress" and "The Clean Watersheds Needs Survey 2012: Report to Congress," the estimated funding need is \$472.6 billion (in 2015 dollars) to maintain and improve the nation's drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years, and \$271 billion (in 2012 dollars) for wastewater infrastructure needs, respectively. This estimate includes \$6.2 billion for drinking water infrastructure in Oregon alone. Funding for the CWSRF needs to be incrementally increased to support water infrastructure projects that are addressing these critical needs.

## **Background of CWSRF Usage by Oregon Irrigation Districts**

Over the course of the program's 30-year history in Oregon, several OWRC member districts have successfully used CWSRF for projects that improve water quality and water quantity associated with water delivery diversions, canals and pipelines throughout the state. OWRC and our members are highly supportive of the CWSRF, including promoting the program to our members and annually submitting federal appropriations testimony in support of increased funding for the CWSRF. We believe it is an important funding tool irrigation districts and other water suppliers are using for innovative piping projects that provide multiple environmental and economic benefits.

Numerous irrigation districts and other water suppliers need to pipe currently open canals, which significantly reduces sediment, improves water temperature, and provides other water quality benefits to rivers and streams. Piping immediately improves the efficiency of the water delivery system and helps increase available water supplies for fish and irrigators alike. These projects also decrease energy consumption (from reduced pumping) and have opportunities for generating renewable energy, primarily through in-conduit hydropower. However, the lack of robust funding for these types of worthwhile projects has created increased uncertainty for potential borrowers regarding whether adequate funding will be available in future years. CWSRF is often an integral part of an overall package of local, state and federal funding that necessitates a stronger level of assurance loan funds will be available for planned water infrastructure projects. Reductions in CWSRF appropriations could lead to loss of grant funding and delay or derail beneficial projects irrigation districts have been developing for years.

The success Oregon districts have had in using the loan program to design and implement multi-beneficial projects has led to increased applications to the CWSRF. Now irrigation districts are once again eligible for a key funding element, principal forgiveness (which was reinstated with the passage of the WIIN Act in 2016 and related state rulemaking in 2017), and we expect to see even more interest in the program. OWRC is hopeful there will be enough funding available to complete projects that will not only benefit the environment and the patrons served by the water delivery system, but also benefit the economy.

## **CWSRF Needs in Oregon**

The appropriations for the CWSRF program over the past few years has been far short of what is needed to address critical water infrastructure needs in Oregon and across the nation. This has led to fewer water infrastructure projects, and therefore a reduction in improvements to water quality and water quantity. However, OWRC is pleased to see a trend of modest increases in appropriations after several years of decreased funding and hope to see this trend continue as infrastructure needs have become more expensive and even more time critical. DEQ's most recent "Proposed Intended Use Plan Update #2 - State Fiscal Year 2020" includes 29 loan applications for a total of \$215,328,922 in requested funding. Currently, the loan program has \$217,419,874 available to lend for state fiscal year 2020.

The following irrigation district projects are currently ranked by DEQ in the top three by overall score and also meet the Green Project Reserve requirement. Increased funding will help catalyze many more projects like the ones below in Oregon and throughout the nation.

**Lone Pine Irrigation District (Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties) \$2,000,000**

Sec. 319, Design and Construction, LPID Irrigation Modernization Project. This project will modernize district-owned canals and laterals to conserve water, improve operational efficiency, reduce electrical and energy costs, reduce O&M for farmers through decreased pumping and improve habitat in the Deschutes River. The project will achieve these goals by piping all of the district's open canals using HDPE and steel pipe. The existing suspension bridge over the Crooked River is in disrepair and a new structure is needed to convey the irrigation water across the river. The district will replace the bridge with a siphon under the river.

**Middle Fork Irrigation District (Hood River County) \$20,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Clear Branch Dam Rehabilitation and Coe Branch Pipeline. The district will implement multiple projects to improve water quality and quantity associated with its irrigation diversions in the Middle Fork Hood River watershed. Specific projects include: installing a new deep water outlet and improving fish passage in Laurance Lake; installing new irrigation pipe to alleviate impacts from current irrigation system and addressing return flows from the irrigation system; improving the spillway at the Clear Branch Dam; and improving irrigation efficiency by district patrons.

**Swalley Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$16,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Irrigation Modernization Project. This irrigation piping project includes the installation of pressurized pipe to eliminate seepage and evaporative loss from open ditches; flow regulating and metering devices at service connections; pressurized delivery to eliminate individual pumps system-wide; active education; and a sprinkler exchange program. Piping and pressurizing the irrigation canals will result in approximately 1.1 million kWh/year in energy conservation and conserve up to 16 cubic feet per second of water during the irrigation season.

**Examples of Green Project Reserves in Oregon**

Oregon irrigation districts and other water suppliers are on the forefront of innovative piping projects that provide and leverage multiple benefits, including “green” infrastructure projects. Otherwise known as Green Project Reserve (GPR), DEQ is required to use at least ten percent of annual federal capitalization grants on projects that promote water and energy efficiency, are environmentally innovative, or include green infrastructure. In 2009, the first year GPR was a requirement, four Oregon irrigation districts received over \$11 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) through the CWSRF for projects which created valuable jobs while improving water quality. These four projects were essential to DEQ not only meeting, but exceeding, the minimum requirement that 20% of the total ARRA funding for the CWSRF be used for GPRs. Without the irrigation district projects, it is likely Oregon's CWSRF would not have qualified for ARRA funding.

In 2019, four GPR projects were financed by DEQ for a total of \$13 million, far exceeding EPA's minimum requirement of \$1.8 million for such projects in Oregon. Of those four funded projects, three were irrigation district projects that met several categories of the GPR requirements related to improved water and energy efficiency. Providing increased appropriations for the CWSRF program will help implement more multi-benefit projects like these in Oregon and across the nation.

**Central Oregon Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$2,000,000 (\$20,000,000 total)**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Smith Rock and King Way Project. The district's multi-phase project will pipe several miles of the 26-mile Pilot Butte Canal open canal system as well as several miles of the 52-mile lateral irrigation canal system. Goals of the project include: habitat enhancement through allocation of water savings to in-stream water rights, reduction in risks to public safety from open irrigation canals, support for existing agricultural uses through water supply reliability, improvement to financial stability through reduced operation and maintenance costs and increased energy generation from micro-hydro, energy conservation, and a reduction of on-farm costs associated with on-farm pumping.

**Tumalo Irrigation District (Deschutes County) \$2,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Feed Canal Project. The district will complete construction of a large portion of the Tumalo Feed Canal, enclosing 8,750 length-feet of the current open conveyance system in pipe, eliminating the existing major seepage loss and returning 2.92 cubic feet per second of water to Tumalo Creek and 787.14 acre-feet of water to Crescent Creek.

**Dee Irrigation District (Hood River County) \$1,000,000**

Sec. 319 Design and Construction, Distribution System Pressurization Project. The district will improve irrigation water efficiency, reduce energy consumption and improve water quality. The project will replace old pipes with a fully pressurized system, thereby eliminating overflows and individual pumps. Pressure head to the system will be provided by a new high-efficiency pump station and each individual patron will be metered. This project will leave water in the West Fork of Hood River, which supports multiple ESA-listed species, and will increase salmon spawning and juvenile rearing habitat, as well as improve fish passage. The increased streamflow will have temperature benefits while the elimination of overflows will reduce the amount of sediment and other materials that are discharged into the river.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, we are strongly supportive of increased appropriations to the CWSRF program, allowing Oregon's DEQ to continue make targeted loans that address Clean Water Act issues and improve water quality while incentivizing innovative water management solutions that benefit local communities, agricultural economies, and the environment. This voluntary approach creates and promotes cooperation and collaborative solutions to complex water resources challenges. We respectfully request the appropriation of at least \$2.5 billion for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund for FY 2021.

Sincerely,  
April Snell, Executive Director  
Phone: 503-363-0121  
Address: 795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

Testimony of April Snell, Executive Director, Oregon Water Resources Congress  
Submitted to the United States House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
March 6, 2020

**RE: FY2021 Budget for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Restoration  
Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program**

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is writing to express its strong support for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) program and is requesting **\$15 million** in FY2021, which is the current authorized amount. The FRIMA program is an essential cost-share funding program that helps water users and fishery agencies better protect sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species while ensuring water supply delivery to farms and communities.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly 1/3 of all irrigated land in Oregon. These water stewards operate complex water management systems, including water supply reservoirs, canals, pipelines, and hydropower facilities.

**FY2021 Appropriations**

The FRIMA program meets a critical need in fishery protection and restoration, complimenting other programs through USFWS. Fish passage and fish screen installations are a vital component to fishery protection with several benefits:

- Keep sensitive, threatened and endangered fish out of canals and water delivery systems
- Allow fish to be safely bypassed around reservoirs and other infrastructure
- Reduce water quality risks to fish species

There are over one hundred irrigation districts and other special districts in Oregon that provide water supplies to over one million acres of irrigated cropland in the state. Almost all these districts are affected by either state or federal Endangered Species Act listings of salmon, steelhead, bull trout or other sensitive, threatened or endangered species. The design and installation of fish screens and fish passage facilities to protect the myriad of fish species is often cost-prohibitive for individual districts to implement without outside funding sources.

Oregon irrigation districts anticipate at least \$25 million in funding is needed to meet current fish passage and fish screen needs in our state. Limited cost-share funds are available from the Oregon Watershed Enhanced Board (OWEB), but the primary cost-share for fish screen and fish passage projects has been provided by the districts and their water users. Projects include construction of new fish screens and fish passage facilities as well as significant upgrades of existing facilities to meet new requirements (new species or science) from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service and the USFWS. Upgrades are often needed to modernize facilities with new technologies that provide better protection for fish species as well as reduced maintenance and increased lifespan for the operator.

## **Background of the Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act (FRIMA) Program**

FRIMA, originally enacted in November 2000, created a federal partnership program incentivizing voluntary fish screen and fish passage improvements for water withdrawal projects in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and western Montana. The funding went to local governments for construction of fish screens and fish passage facilities and is matched with non-federal funding. Irrigation districts and other local governments that divert water for irrigation accessed the funding directly, while individual irrigators accessed funding through their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), which are local governments affiliated with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The original legislation in 2000 (PL.106-502) was supported and requested by the Pacific Northwest Partnership, a coalition of local governmental entities in the four Northwest states, including OWRC. The FRIMA legislation authorized \$25 million annually, to be divided equally among the four states from 2001 to 2012, which was when the original authorization expired. The actual funding appropriated to the FRIMA program (through Congressional write-ins) ranged from \$1 million to \$8 million, well short of the \$25 million authorized and far short of what is needed to address fish passage and screening needs across the region. However, that small amount of funding was used to leverage other funds and assisted the region in making measurable progress towards installing fish screens and fish passage critical to protecting and restoring populations of sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species.

FRIMA funding was channeled through USFWS to state fishery agencies in the four states, and distributed using an application and approval process based on a ranking system implemented uniformly among the states, including the following criteria: Fish restoration benefits, cost effectiveness, and feasibility of planned structure. All projects provided improved fish passage or fish protection at water diversion structures and benefitted native fish species in the area, including several state or federally listed species. Projects were also subject to applicable state and federal requirements for project construction and operation.

FRIMA was reauthorized as part of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN) of 2016. However, a fifth state, California, was also added as an eligible FRIMA cost-share recipient and the program was only reauthorized for \$15 million, well short of the estimated \$500 million in fish screening and passage needs in the Pacific Northwest alone. Now that the program has been reauthorized, it is imperative the program receive appropriations so all five states can better leverage state and local funding to meet their fish passage and screening needs.

## **Program Benefits**

FRIMA projects provide immediate protection for fish and fills a large unmet need in the west for cost-share assistance with fish screening and fish passage installation and improvements. Compared to other recovery strategies, installation of fish screens and fish passage has the highest assurance for increasing populations of sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species in the Pacific Northwest. Furthermore, the construction of these facilities have minimal impact on water delivery operations, and projects are done cooperatively using methods well accepted by landowners and rural communities.

Funding of the FRIMA program has catalyzed cooperative partnerships and innovative projects that provide immediate and long-term benefits to irrigators, fishery agencies, and local communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. This program is also a wise investment, with past projects contributing more than the required match and leveraging on average over one dollar for each federal dollar invested. FRIMA provides for a maximum federal cost-share of 65%, with the applicant's cost-share at 35% along with on-going maintenance and support of the structure for passage or screening purposes. Applicants operate the facilities and state agencies review and monitor the projects.

### **Oregon Projects & Benefits**

Twenty-six fish screen or fish passage projects in Oregon were previously funded using FRIMA for part of the project financing. These projects have led to:

- Installation of screens at seventeen diversions or irrigation pumps
- Removal or modification of twelve fish passage barriers
- Three-hundred sixty-five miles of surface waters re-opened to safe fish passage

In addition, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has used some of the FRIMA funding to develop an inventory of needed fish screens and passages in the state. Grants ranged from just under \$6,000 to \$400,000 in size with a local match averaging 64% of the project costs, well over the amount required under the Act (35%). In other words, each federal dollar invested in the FRIMA program generates a local investment of just over one dollar for the protection of fish species in the Pacific Northwest.

The following are examples of how Oregon has effectively utilized FRIMA money. Additional examples of projects in other states are available from USFWS at:

<https://www.fws.gov/pacific/Fisheries/reportpub/Documents/FRIMA%20Accomplishments%20Report%202002-2012.pdf>

**Santiam Water Control District:** Fish screen project on a large 1050 cubic feet per second (cfs) multipurpose water diversion project on the Santiam River (Willamette Basin) near Stayton, Oregon. Partners are the Santiam Water Control District, ODFW, Marion Soil and Water Conservation District, and the City of Stayton. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$400,000** leveraged a **\$1,200,000** total project cost. Species benefited included winter steelhead, spring Chinook, rainbow trout, and cutthroat trout.

**South Fork Little Butte Creek:** Fish screen and fish passage project on a 65 cfs irrigation water diversion in the Rogue River Basin near Medford, Oregon. Partners are the Medford Irrigation District and ODFW. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$372,000** leveraged a **\$580,000** total project cost. Species benefited included listed summer and winter steelhead, Coho salmon, and cutthroat trout.

**Running Y (Geary Diversion):** Fish screen project on a 60 cfs irrigation water diversion in the upper Klamath Basin near Klamath Falls, Oregon. Partners are the Wocus Drainage District, ODFW, and Jeld-Wen Ranches. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$44,727** leveraged a total project cost of **\$149,000**. Species benefited included listed red-band trout and short-nosed sucker.

**Lakeshore Gardens:** Fish screen project on a 2 cfs irrigation water diversion in the upper Klamath Basin near Klamath Falls, Oregon. Partners are the Lakeshore Gardens Drainage District and ODFW. Approved **FRIMA** funding of **\$5,691** leveraged a total project cost of **\$18,970**. Species benefited included red-band trout, short-nosed sucker and Lost River sucker.

### **Conclusion**

Providing funding for the FRIMA program fills a vital funding gap for fish screens and fish passage projects that are needed to protect and restore sensitive, threatened, and endangered fish species, which in turn benefits the economy, local communities, and the environment. Eligible FRIMA funded projects are ready for construction and will provide immediate habitat benefits for fish as well as jobs and economic revitalization for local communities. Dollar-for-dollar, providing screening and fish passage at diversions is one of the most cost-effective uses of restoration dollars, creating fishery protection at relative low cost, with low risk and significant benefits.

The return of a robustly funded FRIMA program will once again catalyze cooperative partnerships and innovative projects that provide immediate and long-term benefits to irrigators, fishery agencies, and local communities throughout the Pacific Northwest. We respectfully request an appropriation of \$15 million for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Restoration Irrigation Mitigation Act program for FY 2021.

Sincerely,  
April Snell  
Executive Director  
795 Winter St. NE, Salem, OR 97301  
Phone: 503-363-012