

The Western Coalition of Arid States

WESTCAS

Testimony
(for the record)

of

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President
Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS)

For the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Concerning the FY08 U.S.G.S. Budget

March 16, 2007

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is submitting this testimony to the House Appropriations Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee regarding their hearing on the FY 2008 U.S.G.S. budget for FY08. My name is Larry Libeu and I am the President of the organization.

WESTCAS is a coalition of approximately 125 water and wastewater districts, municipalities, and professional organizations focused on water quality and quantity issues in eight western states, including: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Texas. WESTCAS advocates wise use of water resources by promoting scientifically-sound laws, regulations, appropriations, and policies that protect public health and the environment in the arid West

The scientific focus of the USGS and its non-regulatory role, enable the USGS to provide information and interpretation that are policy relevant and policy neutral. The agency also forms collaborative partnerships with State and local governments, which is used to leverage matching funds for topographic and water resources investigations, and directly contracts for reimbursable work. This has brought about several important partnerships for our membership which has benefited the Western water resource program and knowledge base so that better decisions can be made on water resources.

Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Analysis

The following is a comparison of the President's proposed budget (in millions of dollars) to the 2005 and 2006 budgets in the major categories along with the FY2007 Request. We include this because without the spending plans for the agencies programs called for in the continuing resolution it is difficult to understand how the FY08 program requests will fit into the program work. We greatly appreciate the adjustments that Congress had undertaken for the agency during your consideration of last year's budget and believe similar work is going to be necessary this year.

<u>Program</u>	<u>2005 Actual</u>	<u>2006 Enacted</u>	<u>2007 Request</u>	<u>Change</u>
National Mapping Program	118,751	129,273	76,614	-52,659
Geologic Haz, Res, & Proc.	237,346	235,286	217,418	-17,868
Water Resources Invest.	211,200	211,764	204,047	-7,717
Biological Research	171,699	178,544	172,597	-5,947
Enterprise Information	44,373	46,394	111,230	64,838
Science Support	65,584	69,302	67,382	-1,920
Facilities	94,611	94,782	95,472	690
TOTAL	\$943,564	\$965,345	\$944,760	-\$20,585

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WESTCAS Interest in USGS Budget

As the premier, grassroots organization dedicated to scientifically proven methods for environmentally sound long-term water supply planning in the arid West, WESTCAS member agencies rely on USGS water resources and biological data in assessing programs and regulations. Federal and State regulators rely on USGS data for the same purpose.

1. The overall ongoing reduction's in the total USGS budget's that are sent up to Congress is of great concern to WESTCAS in light of major changes in the ecosystems of the Arid West due to global warming, and a variety of natural disasters, which to evaluate comprehensively, requires significantly more scientific data and analyses, not less.
2. WESTCAS initiatives are most affected by the USGC budgets for Water Resources Investigations. These include the Ground-water Resources Program, the National Water-Quality Assessment, the Toxic Substances Hydrology, Hydrologic Research & Development, National Streamflow Information Program, the Hydrologic Networks and Analysis, the Cooperative Water Program, and the Water Resources Research Act Programs. Except for the National Streamflow Information Program and a small increase in the National Water-Quality Assessment, all other 2007 budgets are proposed to be reduced with funding for the Water Resources Research Institutes eliminated. We are concerned that some of the Water Resources Research Institutes will not be able to support themselves and be forced to close. Any decreases in Water Resource Investigations is significant, when more funding in all areas is required to the reasons mentioned in item 1.
3. It is noted that the funding to the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) is proposed to be increased by \$1.4 million for streamgaging activities. This will allow additional streamgages and continued operations at high priority sites. This is good start in reversing the trend and bring back some of the 1,790 streamgages that were lost due to lack of funding from 1980 to 2000. However, WESTCAS supports additional funding for several years for the NSIP to further stabilize, modernize, and expand the streamgage program to meet the USGS goal of 4,700 backbone streamgages from the current 3,100 currently active. We support the sharing of these additional costs with funding partners.
4. WESTCAS is concerned about the decrease in the Biological Research funding because of the increased need for this data in establishing regulations based on good science. Most of our arid western water projects impact and are impacted by issues with flora and fauna. WESTCAS supports the Arid West Project, which is providing biological data and analyses of arid west ecosystems, so that better decision making can occur. In addition some of our members are now concerned and confronted with Quagga and Zebra mussels and feel U.S.G.S. could be playing a stronger role in this regard.

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5. The USGS should be complimented on it's publication of their Scientific Investigations Report- Water Availability for the Western United States- Key Scientific Challenges. WESTCAS agrees with it's analysis of the complex issues and scientific challenges associated with sustainability of water supplies in the arid west. Funding should be provided to implement additional research in areas identified by the Report. We also believe it would be beneficial for the USGS to become involved in the effort of the Western States Water Council that is being funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that is going to be producing a Western States Watershed Study. This report is likely to play an important role in setting the framework for future western water resource programs.

In conclusion, USGS can and is playing an important role in the West where we continue to need assistance with long term issues such as drought. Improved intergovernmental cooperation is needed so that integrated water resources management, systems and watershed approaches can move forward. A collaborative planning model working with State leadership, national, regional and local organizations - a new commitment of Federal involvement - in water resources programs given the aging of our infrastructure and the stretching of our resources due to population growth and environmental requirements is needed if we are to have a sound national water program.

On behalf of WESTCAS, thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony

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