

# The Western Coalition of Arid States

## WESTCAS

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Testimony by Charlie L. Nylander, Chairman

Federal Affairs Committee

Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS)

Submitted (for the record) to the Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee, Interior & Related Agencies

Regarding FY07 United States Geological Survey Budget

April 30, 2006

The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is submitting this testimony regarding the Presidents FY 2007 budget request for the United States Geological Survey.

WESTCAS is a coalition of Western towns and municipalities, water and wastewater agencies, irrigation districts, Native American nations, companies with water and wastewater concerns and professionals in the fields of engineering, the environmental sciences, and natural resources law and policy. WESTCAS was formed in 1992 by Western water and wastewater agencies concerned with the quality and management of water resources in the Arid West. A grass roots organization, WESTCAS is dedicated to encouraging the development of water programs and regulations which assure adequate supplies of high quality water for those living in the arid regions while protecting the environment.

### **Mission and Services**

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) is the nations primary provider of earth and biological information related to natural hazards; certain aspects of the environment; and mineral, energy, water, and biological resources. It is the Federal Government's principal civilian mapping agency and primary source of data on the quantity and quality of the nation's water resources by maintaining a network water measuring stations. The USGS is the sole science agency for the Department of the Interior and provides impartial science information that is used by many other Federal, State and local agencies. Its motto of "science for a changing world" says it all. A major value of the USGS to the Nation is its ability to carry on studies on a national and regional scale and to sustain long-term monitoring and assessment of natural resources.

*The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West*

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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.

### Fiscal Year 2007 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:

<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

### 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 reduction in the total USGS budget by 2% 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. The overall decrease of 3.6% in Water

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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 \$2.3 million for streamgaging activities. This will allow 30 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 by 3.5%, 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.
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.

Thank you for considering our request.

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