



washington dc update

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Federal Funding Programs for Water Resources Infrastructure

This is another installment in a series focusing on what we believe to be the “Big Three” issues facing the water resources community at present. These include “Principals and Guidelines;” Clean Water Act Guidance; and Federal funding for water resource programs. Our topic in this report is funding.

Most of us in the water community tend to think of the Federal Agencies we deal with in our professional lives as gargantuan. How many times have we said, “I’m going to be meeting with the Corps” or perhaps “the Bureau” or “we are going to provide comments on that EPA proposed regulation.”

But in fact, when compared with the size of the Federal deficit issue, key programs which we all rely upon for local/Federal funding partnerships become miniscule by comparison. There has been much comment recently that some \$4 billion a day has to be borrowed just to allow the United States to fund an annual deficit of \$1.4 trillion a year. This figure has increased to about \$4.5 billion as the deficit grows during the course of FY11.

Now let’s compare this figure with the proposed FY12 funding for the following Federal programs:

- \$2.1 billion—USEPA Clean Water SRF
- \$1.387 billion—USEPA Drinking Water SRF
- \$104,000,000—Corps of Engineers Feasibility Studies
- \$1.55 billion—Corps of Engineers Construction
- \$965,000,000—Bureau of Reclamation Total Funding

Taken in this context, what we think of as “big programs” such as the EPA SRF program or Corps of Engineers Construction funding would not even pay for a single day of the FY11 deficit. Indeed, most would not last until lunch. The Bureau’s entire budget wouldn’t even last until the morning coffee break.

That leads us to a question that WESTCAS members need to consider. And that is: “Completely eliminating these programs would not even pay for a part of one day of what is necessary to fund the Federal deficit, yet my agency has used and benefited from these programs for many years. What should I tell my Congressional when they ask for my input?”

Some believe that any deficit reduction, regardless of size, should be pursued. Others question the wisdom of draconian cuts in water resource infrastructure programs since they have hardly any impact on runaway Federal spending yet severely impact programs that have a proven track record of success.

As a WESTCAS member, what is your opinion? Members of Congress and their staffs don’t really have all the facts to make informed decisions on these issues unless their local constituents, in this case from the water community, step up to the plate and educate them.

Summary & Take-Away .

The Big Three Issues

- Principles & Guidelines
- CWA Guidance
- Federal funding for water resources

Each of these will have significant impacts on water resources—in project formulation, permitting, and funding.

Take-Away: Members of Congress and their staffs don’t really have all the facts to make informed decisions on these issues unless their local constituents, in this case from the water community, step up to the plate and educate them. WESTCAS has a particular perspective to convey.

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