

The Western Coalition of Arid States

WESTCAS

August 16, 2017

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The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
B-308, Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you continue to develop the final version of the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill for FY18, the Western Coalition of Arid States [WESTCAS] wishes to express its appreciation for your support of the USGS Water Resources Program including an increase of almost \$38,000,000 over the Administration budget request for the four budget categories under this account. This includes the Water Availability and Use Science Program, the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, the National Water Quality Program, and the Water Resources Research Act Program. We ask that you continue to support a level of funding that is as close to the \$214,754,000 FY17 funding level as possible. And thank you most especially for your increase of \$500,000 for the Groundwater and Streamflow Information program.

WESTCAS is an organization of water and wastewater service providers who advocate for water resources in the Arid Southwest. We are active in both the legislative and regulatory arenas with regard to water related issues that affect our membership. We seek to raise awareness of the unique character of arid regions that lead to the development of proposed legislation and rulemaking in support of water resources.

The USGS Water Resources budget is modest when compared to other agencies under the jurisdiction of the Committee, but its mission is of fundamental importance to water agencies and water resources planning in the Arid West. The FY17 funding level in the Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations bill is \$214,754,000. This is reduced down to a FY18 funding request of \$173,042,000 representing a cut of more than \$41,712,000 or 20% of the FY17 spending.

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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This would result in a reduction of FTE's and harm programs that water resource agencies have come to depend upon including collecting, managing, and disseminating consistently high-quality and reliable water resources information in real time and maintaining a national stream gauge network of 8,200+ real-time stream gages and 1,600+ groundwater wells. Impacts of the Administration's proposed budget on important USGS programs include:

- Reductions in the National Water Quality Program which conducts water quality monitoring assessment and research activities that examine the current quality of the our national freshwater resources and how this quality is changing over time.
- Suspension of studies under the National Research Program in Arizona, California, and Colorado regarding how contaminants move through the environment
- Zeroing out the Cooperative Matching Funds Program of the USGS that are matched by nearly 1,600 local, State, Regional, and Tribal partner agencies to monitor and assess water in every state and territory.

Good decisions on the stewardship of our water resources depend upon good data. Over the course of many years, WESTCAS members have come to depend upon data supplied through our partnership with the USGS. It is also worth noting in these difficult budgetary times that the mission and the impact of the USGS is greatly enhanced by the cost-sharing provided by local governments and agencies including members of WESTCAS.

Restoring all or nearly all of the \$41,712,000 proposed reduction in the USGS's FY18 budget will have a positive impact on water resources and water quality that is much greater than this relatively modest sum of funding involved. We thank you for your continuing support and attention to funding for the USGS Water Resources account in your FY18 bill.

Sincerely,



Steve Bigley
President

SB/dfm

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