

2007 USGS STREAMGAGE COALITION

**AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF HYDROLOGY
AMERICAN RIVERS
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS
AMERICAN WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN WHITEWATER
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN STATE GEOLOGISTS
ASSOCIATION OF STATE DAM SAFETY OFFICIALS
ASSOCIATION OF STATE FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS
ASSOCIATION OF STATE AND INTERSTATE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL
ADMINISTRATORS
COASTAL STATES ORGANIZATION
ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE
FEDERATION OF FLYFISHERS
HYDROPOWER REFORM COALITION
INTERSTATE COUNCIL ON WATER POLICY
IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FLOOD AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AGENCIES
NATIONAL FLOOD DETERMINATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL GROUND WATER ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
RIVER NETWORK
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
TROUT UNLIMITED
WATER ENVIRONMENT FEDERATION
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL**

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
Concerning:

USGS STREAMGAGE PROGRAM FUNDING FY-2008 Appropriations for the US Department of the Interior

These 27 organizations support the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Water Program (CWP) and National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and support a significant funding increase for these two vital programs in FY-2008:

\$78 million appropriation for the Cooperative Water Program (CWP) and

\$34 million appropriation for the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP)

The \$4.2 million increase requested by the President for the NSIP is a step in the right direction, but we are distressed by the decrease proposed for the CWP.

Congressman Norman Dicks, Chairman
Congressman Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
2362 B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 8, 2007

Regarding: STREAMGAGE PROGRAM FUNDING
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2008

Dear Congressman Dicks and Congressman Tiahrt:

The 27 undersigned organizations support the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Water Program (CWP) and National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) and urge your support for a significant funding increase for these two important programs. For FY-2008, a \$78 million appropriation for the CWP and a \$34 million appropriation for the NSIP are necessary. The \$4.2 million increase requested by the Administration for the NSIP is a step in the right direction, but we are concerned about a corresponding \$4.2 million decrease proposed for the CWP.

Many of our members are active, financial partners in the Cooperative Water Program and all of us rely on the trustworthy data collected and disseminated by both of these important programs.

The FY-2006 appropriation of \$62.8 million for the CWP was not sufficient to stop the continuing erosion of program capability which has led to the failure, elimination or obsolescence of many long-term streamgages and reduced our water-related planning, forecasting and emergency warning capabilities. This ongoing erosion has been amplified substantially by the loss of Cooperators' cost-share. An appropriation of \$78 million this year would be quite modest in light of the \$138 million the Cooperators have contributed annually since FY-2004.

Similarly, at \$13.9 million for FY-2006, NSIP was seriously under-funded. In 1998, given the Cooperators' inability to continue to absorb increasing federal costs associated with many gages with long-term records of national significance, the Congress created the NSIP with the idea it would be 100% federally funded. The National Research Council's Committee on Water Resources Research concluded in 2004 that USGS plans for NSIP would provide a "sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation's needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery." Still, NSIP appropriations have not covered even 20% of the annual program cost.

The need for accurate streamflow, groundwater and other water resource data continues to increase as our population, economy and myriad uses of land and water continue to grow. Information from the NSIP and CWP is used on a regular basis by federal, state, tribal, and local agencies and by many private businesses, landowners, public interest organizations and individuals. These two USGS programs have a proven record of providing reliable information that is essential to public and private decision makers for a wide variety of planning, design and management functions that include:

- forecasting of flood and drought conditions and issuing emergency advisories;
- identifying flood risk areas for protection of lives and property and reducing disaster relief expenses;
- projecting future water needs and availability for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses;
- designing of bridges, dams and other infrastructure;
- managing hydropower, water supply, environmental and navigation releases from reservoirs;
- managing fisheries and protecting endangered species and their habitat;
- protecting water quality; and
- planning water-related recreation.

The demand for timely information is clearly reflected in the number of requests to the USGS internet sites providing streamflow data, which are visited at an average rate of 1 million times each day; this rate has been increasing at approximately 30% annually.

While so many depend on CWP and NSIP data, USGS funding for these programs – with flat or nearly flat appropriations in the face of continually rising costs – threatens the availability of critical data needed to inform many complex issues.

The Cooperative Water Program has served for over 110 years as a federal/non-federal partnership. Historically, the CWP was funded through 50/50 cost-share agreements. Today, however, approximately 69% of the funding for the CWP comes from non-USGS sources, as federal funding has not kept up with increases in personnel and operating expenses. During this decade, more than 1100 valuable stations, many with over 30 years of continuous operation, have been lost. Another 216 stations are currently at risk due to the lack of adequate federal funds.

Severe and recurring flooding and drought have caused extensive loss of life, property damage and economic hardship in so many parts of our country, and reliable science to support sound water resource management has never been more important. Without timely information from the CWP and NSIP, our safety, health, property, businesses and many elements of our natural environment are at greater risk.

Considering the magnitude of our ongoing disaster and emergency expenses and the wide range of federal responsibilities and programs that depend on CWP and NSIP information, an increase of \$35 million for these programs in FY-2008 is clearly in the national interest. It would reverse the loss of long-term gages and provide essential information for analysis of climate change, forecasting floods and droughts, administration of water rights, managing interstate water supplies and fulfilling federal treaty, compact and Native American trust responsibilities.

Together, we urge you and the House Appropriations Committee to give a high priority to appropriating sufficient funds for these vital programs to better match non-USGS funding and fully realize the potential benefits to the nation. If we can provide additional information, please contact Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy (phe@riverswork.com or 703-622-6660) or any other of the signatories below.

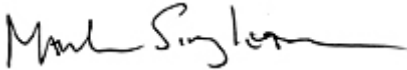
Sincerely,



Linda Eichmiller, Executive Director
Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution
Control Administrators



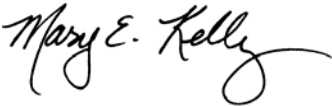
Chris Wood, Vice President for Conservation
Trout Unlimited



Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater



Katherine Andrews, Executive Director
Coastal States Organization



Mary E. Kelly, Co-Director, Land, Water and
Wildlife Program, Environmental Defense



Pamela S. Dillon, Executive Director
American Canoe Association



Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research
Appalachian Mountain Club



Sue Lowry, Chair of the Board of Directors
Interstate Council on Water Policy



Pamela Mayer Pogue, Chair
Association of State Floodplain Managers



Kevin B. McCray, Executive Director
National Ground Water Association



John Duchouquette, President
National Flood Determination Association



Duane A. Smith, Chair
Western States Water Council



David R. Conrad, Sr. Water Resource Specialist
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W. F. Marcuson III, Ph.D., P.E., Hon.M., President
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Brian D Richter,
The Nature Conservancy



Lori Spragens,
Association of State Dam Safety Officials



R. P. VanGytenbeek, Chief Executive Officer
Federation of Flyfishers



Tim Williams, Managing Director, Government Affairs
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Thomas F. Donnelly, Executive Vice President
National Water Resources Association



Deborah Hamlin, Executive Director
Irrigation Association



Don Elder, President/CEO
River Network



Robin Marks, Chair
Hydropower Reform Coalition



Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association



Derek R Guthrie, President
National Association of Flood and Stormwater
Management Agencies



Scott W. Tinker, President
Association of American State Geologists

Copies to all Members of the Committee