

# SUPPORT FOR USGS WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAMS

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

December 14, 2009

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We, the undersigned state officials, urge your support to enable the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to fully implement its design for the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) beginning in FY-2011 and to restore the USGS capacity for matching non-federal cost-share investments in the Cooperative Water Program (CWP) on a 50:50 basis. Full implementation of the NSIP will require \$110 million annually (substantially more than the \$27.7 million available this year). With a fully functioning NSIP, the USGS would also need approximately \$95 million for the CWP to match state, tribal and other non-federal investments in data collection and interpretive investigations (the budget for this year included only \$65.5 million).

Our agencies rely substantially on the water data and science that these two programs provide and many of us are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the Cooperative Water Program. Nationwide, our need for streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, water quality, precipitation and other water resource data increases every year in relation to our growing populations, economic development, land uses, changing climate, ecological awareness and aging infrastructure. Unfortunately, the NSIP and CWP budgets have not kept up with America’s growing needs or the annual cost-share contributions of over 1,500 Cooperators (approximately \$163 million).

The NSIP and CWP are proven, reliable sources of sound scientific information required by decision makers in both the public and private sectors for a wide variety of analytical, planning, design and management functions. The data and science are used on a regular basis by federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies, and by many businesses, landowners, public interest organizations and individuals for many essential decisions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams and other infrastructure;
- forecasting storm surge, flood and drought conditions and issuing emergency advisories;
- identifying flood-prone areas to protect lives and property and reduce disaster relief expenses;
- administration of water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing for safe public recreation;
- analyzing climate change and evaluating response options; and
- projecting future water needs and availability for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses.

Concern for the long-term continuity and reliability of our national streamgaging data led the Congress to ask USGS for a solution and USGS proposed the NSIP in 1999. NSIP was intended to operate as a federally-funded “backbone,” supporting a national streamgaging framework of approximately 4,770 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill five specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design in 2004 and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.” However, of the 4,770 streamgages that are necessary to sustain those five national purposes, more than 425 have not been installed yet, more than 970 need to be reactivated and more than 2,700 active NSIP gages are funded (wholly or partially) with CWP funds. Furthermore, most of those streamgages still need to be “flood hardened” and updated for real-time communications in order to provide reliable and timely flood forecast information.

Since 2001, when the Congress first provided funding to the NSIP, more than 80% of the NSIP streamgages have been supported by the CWP cost-share partners and NSIP has not provided the stability that is needed. While the CWP has served America well for over 110 years, USGS is now able to support less than 1/3 of its’ cost. In 2008, USGS operated a network of about 7,663 active streamgages nationwide, but more than 965 have been

“discontinued” since 2001 due to inadequate funding. Many of those had over 50 years of continuous record, which gives their loss much greater significance. Another 277 streamgages in 31 states are currently identified as being at risk or have already been recently discontinued.

Reliable sources of data and science have never been more important in protecting American communities, businesses, infrastructure investments while we recover in many states from the severe flooding and droughts that have caused so much damage and adapt to the consequences of climate change.

The Interior Department should enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP design as soon as possible and we urge you to support a budget of \$110 million in FY-2011 for that purpose. Full implementation of the NSIP would help reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and provide essential information needed for sound decision making. By itself, however, the NSIP cannot meet our national need for the data and science required to manage water resources in a sustainable manner and we urge you to help USGS secure at least \$95 million for the CWP. Re-balancing the CWP cost-share to the long-standing tradition of 50:50 partnership is especially important now, as state and local agencies confront recession-driven fiscal challenges.

These measures would represent a very reasonable investment, considering the magnitude of our ongoing disaster emergency expenses and the federal responsibilities and programs that depend on information from the NSIP streamgages. If we can provide additional information, please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy ([phe@riverswork.com](mailto:phe@riverswork.com) or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,

**For ALASKA**

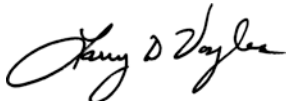


Dick Mylius, Director  
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining, Land and Water

**For ARIZONA**

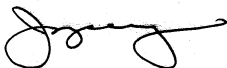


Louis B. Trammell, Director  
Division of Emergency Management



Larry D. Voyles, Director  
Department of Game and Fish

**For ARKANSAS**



J. Randy Young, Executive Director  
Natural Resources Commission

**For COLORADO**



James B. Martin, Executive Director  
Department of Natural Resources



Jennifer Gimbel, Director  
Water Conservation Board



Dick Wolf, State Engineer  
Division of Water Resources



Martha Rudolf, Director of Environmental Programs  
Department of Public Health and Environment

**For GEORGIA**



F. Allen Barnes, Director  
Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division

**For ILLINOIS**



Gary R. Clark, Director  
Department of Natural Resources, Office of Water Resources

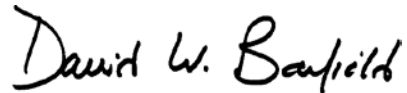
**For KANSAS**



Tracey Streeter, Director  
Kansas Water Office



Keith Sexson, Assistant Secretary  
Department of Wildlife and Parks



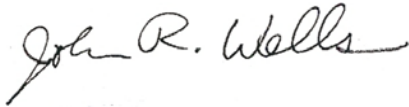
David Barfield  
Chief Engineer

**For MASSACHUTTES**



Glenn Haas, Assistant Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Resource Protection

**For MINNESOTA**



John R. Wells, Strategic Planning Director  
Environmental Quality Board

**For MISSOURI**



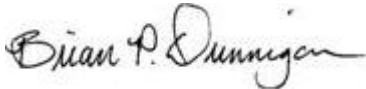
Michael D. Wells, Deputy Director  
Department of Natural Resources

**For MONTANA**



Mary Sexton, Director  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

**For NEBRASKA**



Brian P. Dunnigan, Director  
Department of Natural Resources



Kirk Nelson, Assistant Director  
Game and Parks Commission

**For NEW MEXICO**



John R. D'Antonio, Jr., P.E.  
State Engineer

**For NORTH CAROLINA**



Thomas A. Reeder, Director  
Division of Water Resources

**For NORTH DAKOTA**



Dale L. Frink  
State Engineer

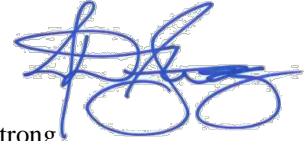
**For OKLAHOMA**



Duane Smith, Director  
Water Resources Board



Steven A. Thompson, Executive Director  
Department of Environmental Quality



JD Strong  
Secretary of the Environment

**For OREGON**



Phillip C. Ward, Director  
Water Resources Department

**For PENNSYLVANIA**



John Hines, Director  
Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Water Policy

**For TENNESSEE**



Aubrey D. McKinney, Chief  
Wildlife Resources Agency, Division of Environmental Services

**For TEXAS**



J. Kevin Ward, Executive Director  
Water Development Board

**For SOUTH CAROLINA**



Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director  
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Land, Water and Conservation

**For UTAH**



Dennis J. Strong  
Director, Division of Water Resources



Walter L. Baker, Director  
Division of Water Quality

**For WASHINGTON**



Ted Sturtevant, Director  
Department of Ecology

**For WISCONSIN**



Todd L. Ambs, Water Division Administrator  
Department of Natural Resources

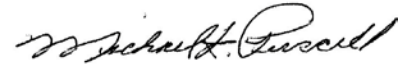
**For WYOMING**



John Corra, Director  
Department of Environmental Quality



Patrick T. Tyrrell  
State Engineer



Michael K. Purcell, Director  
Water Development Commission

**Copies to:**

- David Hayes, Deputy Secretary, US Department of the Interior
- Anne Castle, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science
- Marcia McNutt, Director, US Geological Survey
- Matt Larsen, Associate Director for Water, US Geological Survey
- Peter Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget