COALITION SUPPORTING USGS
NATIONAL STREAMGAGE NETWORK

Congressman Ken Calvert, Chairman
Congressman James P. Moran, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
2363 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.  20515

March 1, 2014

Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2015

Dear Congressman Calvert and Congressman Moran:

We 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-2015 and to restore the USGS capacity to fully match non-federal cost-share investments in the Cooperative Water Program (CWP).

The members of our organizations rely on the water data and science that these two USGS programs produce and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the Cooperative Water Program. America’s need for streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, precipitation and water quality data increases every year in relation to our public safety, land use and economic development needs, and our infrastructure planning and ecological commitments magnify those needs. Unfortunately, the Interior/USGS budgets for the NSIP and CWP have not kept up with our nation’s needs (or with the approximately $80 million contributed annually by over 800 Cooperators to maintain USGS streamgages).

Together, the NSIP and CWP serve the federal need and provide the benchmark for an integrated monitoring network and a proven source of reliable scientific information that we need to support well-informed decision making in both the public and private sectors across a wide variety of water resource planning, design and operational functions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams, levees, 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;
- protecting water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for water supply, irrigation, hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing safety information for boating and other water-based recreation;
- analyzing climate trends and evaluating community and regional 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. The NSIP was designed and authorized by Congress to operate as a federally-funded “backbone” network supporting approximately 4,750 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill 5 specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.” Unfortunately, over 20% of the 4,750 NSIP streamgages were installed and then disconnected due to insufficient funds; another 6% have yet to be installed. Of the 3,500 active NSIP streamgages, 90% do not have reliable federal funding, and their operation depends upon a patchwork of other agencies budgets.

The CWP streamgages have served America well for almost 120 years, and this partnership with state, tribal, interstate and local agencies sustains the rest of the national need for surface water measurement that isn’t
covered by NSIP funding. USGS can barely support 30% of the cost of CWP streamgages today, compared with 50% in the past. This shifts a disproportionate share of the financial burden for the national streamgage network (a federal responsibility) onto state, tribal and local cost-share partners. As a result, the sustainability of this national benchmark is increasingly at risk.

We accept that the federal budget needs to adapt to economic impacts and deficit concerns, but in the face of repeated storm damage, flooding and drought impacts, reliable data and science have never been more essential in protecting our communities, businesses and infrastructure investments. The coordinated NSIP and CWP monitoring programs serve as the stethoscope on America’s rivers and water supplies, and the USGS must lead America’s water community in water data and science, providing the essential standards and communication to assure reliable water information is accessible to all Americans when and where it is needed. Full implementation of these programs is a reasonable federal investment in the data and science needed to support the full set of federal responsibilities while reducing disaster impacts, enhancing the sustainability of our communities, our economies and our ecosystems.

Congress needs this water data and science, too: to evaluate implementation of many federal reservoir projects, numerous tribal agreements and international treaties, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc.

We hope that Congress will enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP, as directed in PL 111-11, and match the non-federal investment in the USGS monitoring network, to reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and to sustain the monitoring needed to understand water quality and climate trends, to forecast floods, storm surge and droughts, and to provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and to monitor compliance with federal treaties, compacts and Native American trust responsibilities.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy (phe@riverswork.com or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,

Cindy Lowry, Executive Director
Alabama Rivers Alliance

Wade Blackwood, Executive Director
American Canoe Association

Keith L. Seitter, Executive Director
American Meteorological Society

Jim Bradley, Sr Director of Government Relations
American Rivers

Randall S. Over, President
American Society of Civil Engineers

C. Mark Dunning, President
American Water Resources Association

Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association

Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater

Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research
Appalachian Mountain Club

John G. Parrish, President
Association of American State Geologists

Timothy H. Quinn, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

Alexandra D. Dunn, Executive Director
Association of Clean Water Administrators
Jennifer Mock Schaeffer, Gov’t Affairs Director
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Lori C. Spragens, Executive Director
Association of State Dam Safety Officials

Chad Berginnis, Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers

Don A. Barnett, Engineer-Manager
Bear River Commission

Bill Jennings, Chairman
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Mary Munson, Executive Director
Coastal States Organization

Don A. Barnett, Executive Director
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Doug Kemper, Executive Director
Colorado Water Congress

Carol R. Collier, Executive Director
Delaware River Basin Commission

Paul Harrison, Senior Director, Water Program
Environmental Defense Fund

Eileen Fielding, Executive Director
Farmington River Watershed Association

Tim Eder, Executive Director
Great Lakes Commission

John Seebach, Chair
Hydropower Reform Coalition

Kevin Lewis, Conservation Program Director
Idaho Rivers United

Norm Semanko, Executive Director
Idaho Water Users Association

Carlton Haywood, Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

Jerry Schulte, Chairman
Interstate Council on Water Policy

Deborah M. Hamlin, Executive Director
Irrigation Association

Dan Boward, Secretary
Maryland Water Monitoring Council

J. Michael Hayden, Executive Director
Missouri River Association of States & Tribes

Ken Kirk, Executive Director
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Susan Gilson, Executive Director
National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies

John M. Johnson, Executive Director & CEO
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director  
**National Drought Mitigation Center**

David C. Curtis, Executive Director  
**National Hydrologic Warning Council**

Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director  
**National Hydropower Association**

Ken P. Norton, Chairman  
**National Water Resources Association**

Bob Johnson, Executive Director  
**National Tribal Water Council**

Malia Hale, Director for Coasts and Floodplains  
**National Wildlife Federation**

Kameran Olney, Director of US Government Relations  
**The Nature Conservancy**

Ron Poltak, Executive Director  
**New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission**

Peter A. Tennant, Executive Director  
**Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission**

April Snell, Executive Director  
**Oregon Water Resources Congress**

Gordon W. “Jeff” Fasset, Chairman  
**Red River Compact Commission**

Andrew Dehoff, Executive Director  
**Susquehanna River Basin Commission**

Leroy Goodson, General Manager  
**Texas Water Conservation Association**

Chris Wood, President & Chief Executive Officer  
**Trout Unlimited**

Don A. Ostler, Executive Director  
**Upper Colorado River Compact Commission**

Dru Buntin, Executive Director  
**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

Tom Myrum, Executive Director  
**Washington State Water Resources Association**

Tim Williams, Director, Government & Public Affairs  
**Water Environment Federation**

Lesli Allison, Executive Director  
**Western Landowners Alliance**

Phil Ward, Chairman  
**Western States Water Council**

Sue Lowry, Commissioner  
**Yellowstone River Compact Commission**

Copies were provided directly to the Appropriations Committee Members, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell and their staff leaders.
March 14, 2014

Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2015

Dear Congressman Calvert and Congressman Moran:

We 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-2015 and to restore the USGS capacity to fully match non-federal cost-share investments in the Cooperative Water Program (CWP).

The members of our organizations rely on the water data and science that these two USGS programs produce and many are active, cost-share partners (“Cooperators”) in the Cooperative Water Program. America’s need for streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, precipitation and water quality data increases every year in relation to our public safety, land use and economic development needs, and our infrastructure planning and ecological commitments magnify those needs. Unfortunately, the Interior/USGS budgets for the NSIP and CWP have not kept up with our nation’s needs (or with the approximately $80 million contributed annually by over 800 Cooperators to maintain USGS streamgages).

Together, the NSIP and CWP serve the federal need and provide the benchmark for an integrated monitoring network and a proven source of reliable scientific information that we need to support well-informed decision making in both the public and private sectors across a wide variety of water resource planning, design and operational functions, including:

- monitoring compliance with federal compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing bridges, dams, levees, 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;
- protecting water rights;
- managing reservoir releases for water supply, irrigation, hydropower, environmental and navigation uses;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing safety information for boating and other water-based recreation;
- analyzing climate trends and evaluating community and regional 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. The NSIP was designed and authorized by Congress to operate as a federally-funded “backbone” network supporting approximately 4,750 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill 5 specific national purposes. The National Research Council’s Committee on Water Resources Research evaluated the NSIP design and concluded that it will provide “a sound, well-conceived program that meets the nation’s needs for streamflow measurement, interpretation, and information delivery.” Unfortunately, over 20% of the 4,750 NSIP streamgages were installed and then disconnected due to insufficient funds; another 6% have yet to be installed. Of the 3,500 active NSIP streamgages, 90% do not have reliable federal funding, and their operation depends upon a patchwork of other agencies budgets.

The CWP streamgages have served America well for almost 120 years, and this partnership with state, tribal, interstate and local agencies sustains the rest of the national need for surface water measurement that isn’t
covered by NSIP funding. USGS can barely support 30% of the cost of CWP streamgages today, compared with 50% in the past. This shifts a disproportionate share of the financial burden for the national streamgage network (a federal responsibility) onto state, tribal and local cost-share partners. As a result, the sustainability of this national benchmark is increasingly at risk.

We accept that the federal budget needs to adapt to economic impacts and deficit concerns, but in the face of repeated storm damage, flooding and drought impacts, reliable data and science have never been more essential in protecting our communities, businesses and infrastructure investments. The coordinated NSIP and CWP monitoring programs serve as the stethoscope on America’s rivers and water supplies, and the USGS must lead America’s water community in water data and science, providing the essential standards and communication to assure reliable water information is accessible to all Americans when and where it is needed. Full implementation of these programs is a reasonable federal investment in the data and science needed to support the full set of federal responsibilities while reducing disaster impacts, enhancing the sustainability of our communities, our economies and our ecosystems.

Congress needs this water data and science, too: to evaluate implementation of many federal reservoir projects, numerous tribal agreements and international treaties, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc.

We hope that Congress will enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP, as directed in PL 111-11, and match the non-federal investment in the USGS monitoring network, to reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and to sustain the monitoring needed to understand water quality and climate trends, to forecast floods, storm surge and droughts, and to provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and to monitor compliance with federal treaties, compacts and Native American trust responsibilities.

We are happy to answer your questions or provide additional information; please contact any of us or Peter Evans at the Interstate Council on Water Policy (phe@riverswork.com or 703-243-7383).

Sincerely,

Cindy Lowry, Executive Director
Alabama Rivers Alliance

Wade Blackwood, Executive Director
American Canoe Association

Keith L. Seitter, Executive Director
American Meteorological Society

Jim Bradley, Sr Director of Government Relations
American Rivers

Randall S. Over, President
American Society of Civil Engineers

C. Mark Dunning, President
American Water Resources Association

Tom Curtis, Deputy Executive Director
American Water Works Association

Mark Singleton, Executive Director
American Whitewater

Kenneth D. Kimball, Director of Research
Appalachian Mountain Club

John G. Parrish, President
Association of American State Geologists

Timothy H. Quinn, Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

Alexandra D. Dunn, Executive Director
Association of Clean Water Administrators
Jennifer Mock Schaeffer, Gov’t Affairs Director  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Diane VanDe Hei, Executive Director  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

Lori C. Spragens, Executive Director  
Association of State Dam Safety Officials

Chad Berginnis, Executive Director  
Association of State Floodplain Managers

Don A. Barnett, Engineer-Manager  
Bear River Commission

Bill Jennings, Chairman  
California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

Mary Munson, Executive Director  
Coastal States Organization

Don A. Barnett, Executive Director  
Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Forum

Doug Kemper, Executive Director  
Colorado Water Congress

Carol R. Collier, Executive Director  
Delaware River Basin Commission

Paul Harrison, Senior Director, Water Program  
Environmental Defense Fund

Eileen Fielding, Executive Director  
Farmington River Watershed Association

Tim Eder, Executive Director  
Great Lakes Commission

John Seebach, Chair  
Hydropower Reform Coalition

Kevin Lewis, Conservation Program Director  
Idaho Rivers United

Norm Semanko, Executive Director  
Idaho Water Users Association

Carlton Haywood, Executive Director  
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

Jerry Schulte, Chairman  
Interstate Council on Water Policy

Deborah M. Hamlin, Executive Director  
Irrigation Association

Dan Boward, Secretary  
Maryland Water Monitoring Council

J. Michael Hayden, Executive Director  
Missouri River Association of States & Tribes

Ken Kirk, Executive Director  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Susan Gilson, Executive Director  
National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies

John M. Johnson, Executive Director & CEO  
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators
Michael J. Hayes, Executive Director  
National Drought Mitigation Center

David C. Curtis, Executive Director  
National Hydrologic Warning Council

Linda Church Ciocci, Executive Director  
National Hydropower Association

Ken P. Norton, Chairman  
National Water Resources Association

Bob Johnson, Executive Director  
National Tribal Water Council

Malia Hale, Director for Coasts and Floodplains  
National Wildlife Federation

Kameran Olney, Director of US Government Relations  
The Nature Conservancy

Ron Poltak, Executive Director  
New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission

Peter A. Tennant, Executive Director  
Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission

April Snell, Executive Director  
Oregon Water Resources Congress

Gordon W. “Jeff” Fasset, Chairman  
Red River Compact Commission

Andrew J. Delia  
Andrew Dehoff, Executive Director  
Susquehanna River Basin Commission

Leroy Goodson, General Manager  
Texas Water Conservation Association

Chris Wood, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Trout Unlimited

Don A. Ostler, Executive Director  
Upper Colorado River Compact Commission

Dru Buntin, Executive Director  
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Tom Myrum, Executive Director  
Washington State Water Resources Association

Tim Williams, Director, Government & Public Affairs  
Water Environment Federation

Lesli Allison, Executive Director  
Western Landowners Alliance

Phil Ward, Chairman  
Western States Water Council

Sue Lowry, Commissioner  
Yellowstone River Compact Commission

Copies were provided directly to the Appropriations Committee Members, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell and their staff leaders

Page 4 of 4