

*The plan is to finalize this for delivery in early November 2008 with as many organizational endorsements (name, title and electronic signature) as we can collect by the end of October 2008. The same endorsements will be included in a companion letter (identical, except for the addressees) to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee.*

*If you want to support this request, please provide confirmation with the electronic signature (as a jpg or gif file), name and title of the authorized official by e-mail to Peter Evans, ICWP Director ([phe@riverswork.com](mailto:phe@riverswork.com)). For everyone's protection, all the electronic signature files will be deleted after the letter is converted into a password-protected pdf file.*

*Feel free to distribute this to other interested organizations and invite to join us in the endorsement of this letter.*

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

September 29, 2008 Draft

**Regarding: WATER DATA & SCIENCE PROGRAM FUNDING**  
Interior Department Appropriations for FY-2009 and FY-2010

Dear Congressman Dicks and Congressman Tiahrt:

The undersigned organizations support the US Geological Survey's **Cooperative Water Program (CWP)** and **National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP)**. We urge your support to enable the USGS to fully implement its design for the NSIP beginning in FY-2009 and to restore the capacity for USGS to match non-federal cost-share investments in the CWP on a 50:50 basis. Full implementation of the NSIP will require an annual appropriation of \$110 million, substantially more than the \$23.8 million requested by President Bush for FY-2009. With a fully functioning NSIP, the USGS will also need at least \$95 million for the CWP to restore its capacity to fully match state, tribal and other non-federal investments in data collection and interpretive investigations (the President's request for FY-09 included a reduction of \$0.5 million below the \$62.8 million enacted for FY-2008).

Members of the undersigned organizations rely extensively on the trustworthy data and science that these two programs produce and many are active, financial partners ("Cooperators") in the Cooperative Water Program. Nationwide, our need for a well-informed understanding of streamflow, groundwater, tidal surge, precipitation and other water resource attributes continues to increase every year in relation to our growing population, economic development, changing land uses and ecological awareness.

The NSIP and CWP have proven to be a source for reliable, scientific information concerning America's water resources, information that is required by decision makers in both the public and private sectors for a wide variety of planning, design and management functions. Unfortunately, the USGS capacity has not kept up with America's growing needs despite the strong, national cost-share partnership with over 1,500 Cooperators.

NSIP and CWP data and science are needed on a regular basis by many federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies, and by many businesses, landowners, public interest organizations and individuals for many essential decisions, including the:

- monitoring compliance with federal treaty, compact and Native American trust responsibilities;
- designing of bridges, dams and other infrastructure;
- forecasting of 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 and management of hydropower generation, environmental and navigation releases from reservoirs;
- monitoring and protecting water quality, fisheries, wetlands and endangered species;
- providing for public recreation safety;
- analysis of climate change; and
- projecting future water needs and availability for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses.

The NSIP and CWP inform and guide vital programs and diverse interests in all 50 states but, unfortunately, they do not have sufficient capacity to support future water resource and infrastructure decisions necessary to

keep our communities and businesses safe and prosperous. 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 the stability that NSIP was designed to provide remains elusive.

The CWP has served America very well for more than 110 years as a federal/non-federal partnership funded through 50/50 cost-share agreements. Today, however, USGS is able to support less than 1/3 of the cost. From the combined network of about 7,550 active streamgages nationwide, more than 780 have been “discontinued” in the last 10 years due to inadequate funding; many of them had over 50 years of continuous record, which gives their loss even greater significance. More than 175 streamgages were discontinued between 2004 and 2005 and another 258 streamgages in 33 states are currently identified as being at risk or recently discontinued.

Concern for the long-term continuity and reliability of our national streamgaging data led the USGS to propose the NSIP in 1999. Unlike the CWP, the NSIP was designed as a federally funded “backbone,” supporting a national communications framework and the subset of approximately 4,770 streamgages and tidal gages necessary to fulfill five specific national needs. 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 needed to sustain those five national needs, at least 425 have never been installed, more than 970 need to be reactivated and approximately 2,725 are funded (wholly or partially) with CWP funds; most of them still need to be “flood hardened” and updated with real-time communications equipment in order to provide reliable flood forecast data.

In light of the severe flooding and drought that have recently caused so much loss of life and damage to property in so many states, and with climate change implications to understand and integrate in our planning, reliable sources of data and science has never been more important in protecting American communities and infrastructure investments.

The Committee should enable the USGS to fully implement the NSIP plan as soon as possible and we urge you to appropriate \$110 million in FY-2009 for that purpose. This represents 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. Full funding for the NSIP would reverse the loss of long-term streamgages and provide essential information needed to assess water quality and climate change, forecast floods (including storm surge) and droughts and provide emergency warnings, manage interstate water supplies and monitor compliance with federal treaty, compact and Native American trust responsibilities.

If the NSIP is fully implemented, following its approved design, federal funding for the USGS share of the CWP data collection and investigations of at least \$95 million will be necessary to sustain the planning, water rights administration, project operation and flow forecasting capabilities that so many people, businesses, communities and agencies depend upon nationwide. Federal support for the CWP has been far less than the \$163 million invested by non-federal Cooperators.

We urge your support to enable the USGS to fully implement its design for the NSIP and to restore the USGS capability to match non-federal cost share investments in the CWP on a 50:50 basis, as was the practice for most of the past 110 years. 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,

*A similar letter endorsed by the following 39 organizations was submitted in February 2008:*

*Martin A. Bartels, Executive Director  
American Canoe Association*

*Antonius Laenen, President  
American Institute of Hydrology*

*Andrew Fahlund, VP for Conservation  
American Rivers*

*David G. Mongan, P.E., F.ASCE, President  
American Society of Civil Engineers*

*Jane Rowan, 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*

*Chako John, President*  
**Association of American State Geologists**

*Lori Spragens, Executive Director*  
**Association of State Dam Safety Officials**

*Al Goodman, Chair*  
**Association of State Floodplain Managers**

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

*Kristen M. Fletcher, Executive Director*  
**Coastal States Organization**

*Carol R. Collier, Executive Director*  
**Delaware River Basin Commission**

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

*R.P. Van Gytenbeek, CEO*  
**Federation of Flyfishers**

*John Seebach, Chair*  
**Hydropower Reform Coalition**

*Joseph K. Hoffman, Executive Director*  
**Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin**

*Thomas Beauduy, Chair*  
**Interstate Council on Water Policy**

*Deborah Hamlin, Executive Director*  
**Irrigation Association**

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

*John M. Johnson, Executive Director*  
**National Association of State Boating Law Administrators**

*Leila A. Taha, President*  
**National Flood Determination Association**

*Thomas F. Donnelly, Executive Vice President*  
**National Water Resources Association**

*David R. Conrad, Sr. Water Resources Specialist*  
**National Wildlife Federation**

*Brian Richter, Co-Leader, Global Freshwater Team*  
**The Nature Conservancy**

*Larry M. Feazell, Executive Director*  
**Ohio River Basin Commission**

*Don Elder, President/CEO*  
**River Network**

*Paul O. Swartz, Executive Director*  
**Susquehanna River Basin Commission**

*Jack E. Williams, Ph.D., Sr. Scientist*  
**Trout Unlimited**

*Don Ostler, Executive Director*  
**Upper Colorado River Commission**

*Holly Stoerker, Executive Director*  
**Upper Mississippi River Basin Association**

*William Bertera, Executive Director*  
**Water Environment Federation**

*Duane Smith, Chairman*  
**Western States Water Council**

**Copies: Members of the Appropriations Committee**  
**Secretary of the Interior and key staff**  
**OMB Director and key staff**