

THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE/WATER RESOURCES

SECURE Water Act

Senator Jeff Bingaman is circulating among various water resource interests for comment a draft bill to be titled, the "Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand and Responsibly Enhance Water Act." The SECURE Water Act would direct the Secretary of Energy and Interior to increase water-related data acquisition and analysis activities in order to assess the long-term availability of water for irrigation, hydroelectric power, and municipal and environmental uses, as well as authorize and facilitate improved water management by the Bureau of Reclamation. The purpose is to: (1) increase water use efficiency; (2) expand data acquisition and analysis of the Nation's water resources to improve its management; and (3) enhance the understanding of climate change impacts on water availability and energy production in the United States.

The SECURE Water Act would create a Reclamation Climate Change Adaptation Program to assess the risks of climate change to water resources in its service area and develop strategies and conduct feasibility studies to address water shortages, conflicts and other impacts to water users and the environment. It also authorizes a Reclamation Water Management Improvement Program to provide financial assistance to States, Tribes, and local entities to help construct improvements or take other actions to increase water-use efficiency to address drought, climate change, or other water-related crises.

Further, the Interior Secretary is to establish a Climate Change & Water Intra-Governmental (I-G) Panel to review the science on climate change and water, and develop strategies to better forecast impacts to water availability, and may fund demonstration projects to help implement the strategies. The I-G panel would consist of the head of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Reclamation, and Army Corps of Engineers. The I-G review and strategy would include an assessment of the impacts of climate change on streamflow, ground water, soil moisture, evapotranspiration and evaporation rates, snowpack, precipitation and glacier mass. The panel would identify data gaps, establish data management and communication protocols, consider options for establishing a data portal to enhance access to inter-agency data, and build on and integrate present initiatives such as the National Integrated Drought Information System and National Weather Service's Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services.

The bill would also attempt to facilitate the development of models to integrate ground water and surface water interactions, and consider the need and mechanisms to effectively couple global climate models, regional climate models, and hydrologic models to produce information useful for water managers in developing adaptation strategies in long-term water planning and decision making. The Secretary would report to the Congress on the strategy within one year of enactment of the bill.

The bill would also authorize the Secretary, in consultation with the I-G panel and Federal Advisory Committee on Water Information, to provide grants or enter into a contract or cooperative agreement to implement demonstration, research and methods development projects to help implement the strategy. Funding provided to any one entity could not exceed \$1M, and must result in a peer-reviewed report on the results. Authorized appropriations would be \$2M for FY 2008-2009, and \$10M for FY2010-2012.

Moreover, the Energy Secretary and Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs) are to assess the effects of climate change on the water available for facilities producing hydropower marketed by the PMAs.

In the bill, under USGS Water Data Enhancement and Planning, USGS is directed to expand the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) in accordance with specific objectives and establish and maintain a minimum of 4,700 measuring sites over the next ten years. To meet the latter goal, \$7.5M is authorized for FY 2008-2018. USGS is also to work with federal, state, and local entities to implement a national "systematic groundwater monitoring program for major aquifer systems in the U.S., and to support the Groundwater Climate Response Network." While the ground water monitoring program may be fully federally-funded, "priority shall be given...where a significant state or local cost-share is provided...." Generally, such sums as may be necessary are authorized for both programs, except as noted above.

USGS is further required to work with appropriate state and local entities to conduct a study identifying significant brackish aquifers in the U.S. and consolidating existing available data. A report to the Congress is required within two years. It is to include maps and summaries of current information covering levels of total dissolved solids, data gaps that need to be addressed to fully characterize each aquifer, and any current uses of brackish ground water. A total of \$3M is authorized for FY 2008-2009.

Also, the Interior Secretary may provide grants to appropriate entities to develop new methods and technologies to estimate or measure water resources data in a cost-efficient manner, as well as improve methods for water resource data analysis and delivery. The

objectives include: (1) predicting and measuring streamflows and changes in ground water storage; (2) improving data standards and analysis, including validation of data entered into Geographic Information System (GIS) databases; (3) measuring precipitation, streamflow and potential evapotranspiration; (4) developing descriptive and predictive models that link ground water and surface water; and (5) measuring water withdrawals, return flows and consumptive use. Up to \$500,000 is available for any one project, to be matched by non-federal entities, with a total of \$5M/year authorized for FY 2008-2018.

In addition, USGS is to implement a National Water Use and Availability Assessment Program to: (1) provide better information on water resources in the U.S.; (2) identify trends in use and availability; and (3) help forecast water availability for future needs. USGS is also to conduct an ongoing assessment of water use and maintain a national inventory of water resources and provide grants to States to enable locally-generated data to be integrated with national datasets. Some of the goals of the program include incorporating “water use science principles, emphasizing applied research and statistical estimation techniques in assessing water use,” and “focusing on the scientific integration of water use, water flow, and water quality to generate relevant information about human impacts on water and ecological resources.” The USGS is to present a report to Congress in 2010, and every five years thereafter. A total of \$20M/year is authorized for FY 2008-2022.

USGS is authorized to award grants not to exceed \$250,000 to “State water resources agencies to assist with state efforts to establish, or integrate existing water use and availability datasets,” under standards developed by USGS to “assure that the data will be of sufficient quality and standards to be integrated with national datasets..., and enhance the ability of state officials to carry-out water management and regulatory responsibilities pursuant to state law.” The bill would provide a total of \$12.5M for FY 2008-2012. Of note, a disclaimer in the bill states: “The Secretary shall comply with all applicable State water laws in carrying out this title.”

PEOPLE

In a September 10 letter, **Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius** has confirmed the appointment of **Adrian Polansky**, Secretary of Agriculture, as a WSWC member, adding also acting Chief Engineer **David Barfield**, and naming as an alternate Assistant Chief Engineer **Paul Graves**. The governor kindly added, “I would like to...recognize the council for serving as a productive forum for water issues, enhancing cooperation between states and the federal government, and carrying out water-related directives of the Western Governors’ Association.”

MEETINGS

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Water Education Foundation (WEF) are sponsoring a one-day event, “Climate Change: Water Adaptation Summit,” on October 3 at the Doubletree Hotel in Santa Monica. It will address a host of issues related to adapting to future conditions such as water supply and quality, flood management and ecosystem sustainability in California. The agenda includes a discussion of findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 4th Assessment, moderated by Jeanine Jones, DWR. Other topics will include integrated regional water management opportunities, challenges in the Bay-Delta, agricultural perspectives on water management and more. To register for the Climate Change: Water Adaptation Summit and view a complete agenda, go to Upcoming Events at <http://www.climatechange.water.ca.gov/>.

Water Policies and Planning in the West: Ensuring a Sustainable Future. The WGA/WSWC Conference will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah on October 10-12, at the Sheraton City Centre. EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson has confirmed that he will serve as a keynote speaker at the upcoming conference. Utah Governor Jon Huntsman will also deliver a keynote address, as will Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Administrator, NOAA, and Bob Johnson, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner. Stakeholders, federal, state, tribal and local agency representatives, and water experts from across the West are expected to attend. Register now online at: <http://www.regonline.com/139310>. An updated agenda has been posted at the website <http://www.westgov.org>. The Sheraton can be reached at (801) 401-2000.

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is an organization of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.