



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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WESTERN GOVERNORS

Appropriations/Agriculture

On May 5, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) submitted testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration. WGA expressed support for U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs, particularly the work of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). "[NRCS] is especially important to western states, and WGA encourages the Subcommittee to provide adequate funding for conservation programs administered by the agency. NRCS empowers private landowners to work with states and the federal government on large-scale management priorities across landscapes with different land ownerships." They urged adequate funding of NRCS' Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting (SSWSF) program, which they said provides integral information for water supply management decisions at federal, state, and private levels. "Sufficient funding is required to ensure the long-term viability of the program's continued and uninterrupted collection of snowpack and water data, the full operation and maintenance of all snow survey sites, the hiring of needed program staff, and technological and software upgrades.... The program's predictive capabilities are critically useful throughout the arid West, where snowpack accounts for the vast majority of the region's annual water supply." <https://westgov.org/news/article/western-governors-submit-testimony-on-fy-2026-appropriations-to-house>

Appropriations/Commerce, Justice, Science

On May 5, WGA submitted testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies. The governors expressed support for key federal programs including the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) National Land Imaging Program, and any other federal programs focused on improving data related to snowpack, streamflow, soil moisture, and forecasting. They urged better federal coordination for water data

collection and information sharing. "This information allows water users throughout the West...to assess drought conditions and respond effectively with drought mitigation measures to reduce the risk of wildfires, ecosystem impairments, agricultural production loss, and degradation of municipal and industrial water supplies.... Western Governors recognize the need for improved predictive capabilities for extreme weather variability and urge the Subcommittee to place a priority on improving the sub-seasonal and seasonal precipitation forecasting capabilities that could facilitate water management decision making."

Appropriations/Energy and Water Development

On May 5, WGA submitted testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development. They stressed that States have primary legal authority over water resources within their borders, and federal support is essential to address both current and future water challenges in the West. They called on Congress to ensure robust funding for new water infrastructure projects and critical upgrades to aging systems.

The governors urged the Subcommittee to fully use the Reclamation Fund for its intended purpose—supporting western water needs. This includes building authorized rural water projects and fulfilling commitments tied to Indian water rights settlements. WGA emphasized the value of key federal programs like Reclamation's WaterSMART initiative and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Planning Assistance to States Program. Recognizing the growing need for investment, the governors also encouraged exploring more private-sector involvement. They pointed to innovative financial tools—such as loan guarantees, revolving funds, infrastructure banks, and water trust funds—as ways to attract additional capital for water projects. The testimony underscored the importance of strong federal support for water data programs run by the Corps and Reclamation. They urged the Subcommittee to push federal agencies to streamline internal processes, improve collaboration with state governments, and better integrate state-collected data into national programs and policy decisions. Finally, WGA stressed the need for

well-qualified staff to manage permitting for water infrastructure. They recommended additional support for federal agencies to increase their capacity to review and approve critical infrastructure projects.

Appropriations/Interior & Environment

On May 5, WGA submitted testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, expressing support for appropriations and activities of Interior agencies, repeating a letter sent to the House on March 18. They expressed appreciation for Congress' increased attention to wildfire risk reduction and mitigation and endorsed many recommendations from the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission's final report—particularly the call for incentives that encourage state, local, and tribal governments to build fire- and smoke-resilient communities. WGA also backed balanced species conservation strategies that involve early stakeholder engagement. To strengthen interagency collaboration, the governors encouraged federal agencies to revise government personnel policies and consider shared staff positions.

WGA celebrated the recent passage of the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act (P.L. 118-155) and urged full funding for the new Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program (WSW #2639). Highlighting the importance of data-driven decision-making, the governors called for full appropriations for the U.S. Geological Survey's Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, noting its vital role in water management, drought planning, and disaster response. They also urged the Subcommittee to fully fund State Revolving Funds (SRFs) at authorized levels and ensure that earmarked community grants do not reduce the SRF allocations to States. WGA reaffirmed State primacy over groundwater and asked Congress to include clear language in legislation acknowledging this authority. They called on federal agencies to work within existing state frameworks when addressing groundwater issues.

ADMINISTRATION

Appropriations/National Weather Service

On May 2, five former National Weather Service (NWS) Directors published an open letter opposing FY2026 cuts to NOAA, particularly to the NWS. The President's request proposes to cut NOAA's budget by close to 30%. They wrote: "While details aren't yet available, if earlier indications hold true this budget would essentially eliminate NOAA's research functions for weather, slash funding for next generation satellite procurement, and severely limit ocean data observations. Even if the [NWS] remains level funded, given the

interconnectedness of all of the parts of NOAA, there will be impacts to weather forecasting as well. We cannot let this happen."

The former NWS directors expressed alarm that the funding cuts, combined with the loss of over 10% of its staffing in recent months, will force some forecast offices to go to part time services during the busiest time for severe storm predictions. "Our worst nightmare is that weather forecast offices will be so understaffed that there will be needless loss of life." They noted the applications of weather forecasting to the American economy including maritime transport, agriculture, dam and reservoir operations, and the \$320B ocean fisheries sector. They also pointed out NWS' role of issuing warnings and other information during tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and extreme wildfire. "We know firsthand what it takes to make accurate forecasts happen and we stand united against the loss of staff and resources at NWS and are deeply concerned about NOAA as a whole."

MEETINGS

Summer Meetings/60th Anniversary

The WSWC 2025 Summer Meetings and 60th Anniversary will be held in Snowbird, Utah on June 10-12, at the Cliff Lodge. A room block is being held in the name of the WSWC. The guest room rate is \$142.00 plus tax and fees per night (\$15 nightly resort fee). Our room block deadline is **May 14, 2025**. There is no registration fee to attend the meetings, but we are asking all individuals, regardless of in person or virtual attendance to please register in advance. For further information please see: <https://westernstateswater.org/events/2025-wwsc-summer-207th-meetings-and-60th-anniversary-snowbird-utah/>

Schedule of Meetings (Mountain Daylight Time):

Tuesday, June 10

8:00 am A Full Day Field Trip

Wednesday, June 11

8:00 am Host State Presentation
9:00 am Water Resources Committee Meeting
10:00 am Water Quality Committee Meeting
11:00 am Legal Committee Meeting
12:00 pm Executive Committee (over lunch)
1:30pm WSWC Strategic Directions Discussion
6:00 pm Reception Celebrating 60th Anniversary

Thursday, June 12

8:00 am WSWC Full Council (207th) Meeting

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity 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.