

October 2019



# WestFAST News

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Chair – Patrick Lambert; Federal Liaison – Deborah Lawler

## [Federal action plan focused on improving water prediction for Western U.S.](#)

NOAA 10/18/19. In the Western United States, meeting water demands with available water supplies is becoming increasingly complex. Knowing where, when, and how much precipitation in a particular valley, mountain, lake, or river will become available for use to the people living there promotes efficiency as water managers will be able to more effectively prepare and meet the various water users' needs and obligations.

To promote reliable access to water, last year President Trump issued a Presidential Memorandum on Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West. In that memo, the President directed the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) to develop an action plan, in coordination with water experts and resource managers, to improve forecasts of water availability. In response to the President's directive, today, the DOC and the DOI are releasing the Federal Action Plan for Improving Forecasts of Water Availability (Action Plan).

"The Administration is committed to advancing America's water infrastructure, and ensuring communities have reliable access to water," said Mary B. Neumayr, Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality. "The Action Plan is an important step toward improving our Nation's

observation, modeling and forecasting capabilities related to water availability, enabling the Federal government and stakeholders to make more timely and informed decisions."

"The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has met early milestones in the new federal action plan thanks to the landmark Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act and progress will continue to be made to improve water prediction forecasts through partnered activities leveraging the National Water Center," said RDML Tim Gallaudet, Ph.D., USN Ret., deputy NOAA administrator. "Over the next three years, we will enhance our modeling tools for connecting accurate precipitation forecasts into surface water availability forecasts."

"We are committed to using the best science available to reliably provide water and power for agriculture, municipal use and environmental needs," said Timothy R. Petty, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of the Interior. "Leveraging resources across the Federal family is the most effective way to utilize a modern water infrastructure through improved and expanded water forecasting tools."

The Action Plan identifies four areas for improvement: enhance weather forecasts to improve water prediction; improve and expand the use of water forecast information to benefit water management outcomes; improve science and technology for water prediction; and implement

integrated water availability assessments at national and local basin scales.

Twelve activities in the Action Plan have been completed or are underway. In particular, NOAA ushered in its new global forecast model, the foundation for all its weather forecast models. This change paves the way for better numerical weather prediction into the future, including improved water prediction.

Another milestone was met when NOAA moved into operations version 2.0 of the National Water Model. This model simulates and forecasts how water moves throughout the nation's rivers and streams using data from more than 8,000 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) gauges to simulate conditions for over 5 million miles of rivers and streams in the contiguous United States. The model generates hourly forecasts for the entire river network as well as high-resolution forecasts of soil moisture, surface runoff, snow water equivalent, and other parameters. Version 2.1 of the National Water Model is scheduled for implementation in early 2021 and includes several enhancements to improve forecast accuracy.

NOAA also deployed the Hydrologic Ensemble Forecast Service (HEFS) in two new western river systems and three new river locations of reservoir inflow. The model delivers ensemble forecasts from 6 hours to a full year, which can be tailored to users' needs. The Bureau of Reclamation will develop and test methods using HEFS to inform reservoir operations decision making in these newly available systems.

The Bureau of Reclamation is also working with NOAA and the National Center for Atmospheric Research to improve short-term (5-day) forecasting in order to improve in-season reservoir operations for irrigation. Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations uses data from the watershed and weather and water forecasts to help water managers selectively retain or release water from reservoirs to balance operating priorities such as water supply,

environmental flows, flood control, and dam safety. This approach is being tested at Lake Mendocino, California, a facility owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The USGS continues to develop and refine the Next Generation Water Observation System, which will improve access to data that can be used in state-of-the-art forecasting and modeling tools to help improve decision-making by water managers. Additionally, the USGS will release the National Water Census at the end of calendar year 2019, which will provide daily national assessments of water availability, initially only in terms of quantity but inclusive of quality and use by the end of 2020.

While many activities to improve water forecasts are already underway, goals set in the Action Plan extend through 2023.

### [Reclamation releases funding opportunity to develop innovative and cost-effective desalination technologies](#)

RECLAMATION 10/10/19. The Bureau of Reclamation has released a funding opportunity for the Desalination and Water Purification Research Program. The goal of the DWPR Program is to increase water supplies by reducing the cost, energy consumption and environmental impacts of treating impaired and otherwise unusable waters.

"Reclamation is interested in research desalination and water purification technologies where the benefits are widespread and where research has a national significance, benefitting a large sector of the public," said Reclamation's Program Administrator Yuliana Porras-Mendoza.

Funding is available, subject to appropriations, in two areas: laboratory and pilot-scale projects.

- Laboratory scale projects are typically bench scale studies involving small flow rates. They are used to determine the viability of a novel process, new

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material or process modification. Federal funding is limited to no more than \$250,000 and must be completed within two years.

•Pilot-scale projects test a novel process at a sufficiently large scale to determine the technical, practical and economic viability of the process and are generally preceded by laboratory studies that demonstrate the technology works. Federal funding is limited to no more than \$800,000 per proposal and must be completed within three years.

Applicants must provide at least 75% non-federal cost-share with the exception of institutions of higher education, United States-Mexico binational research foundations and inter-university research programs.

To view this funding opportunity, visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and search for funding opportunity number BOR-DO-20-F004. Applicants for desalination and water purification research project funding must submit their proposals by 4 p.m. MST on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019.

## [EPA Invites 38 New Projects to Apply for Water Infrastructure Loans to Improve Water Quality](#)

EPA 10/22/19. At an event held today in Detroit, Michigan, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced that 38 new projects in 18 states are being invited to apply for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans. Together, the selected borrowers will apply for WIFIA loans totaling approximately \$6 billion to help finance over \$12 billion in water infrastructure investments and create almost 200,000 jobs.

“Through WIFIA, EPA is playing an integral role in President Trump’s efforts to improve and upgrade our nation’s water infrastructure and ensure all Americans have access to clean and safe water,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “This announcement highlights billions of dollars in

needed water infrastructure investments to upgrade aging infrastructure, reduce exposure to lead and emerging contaminants and improve the lives of millions of Americans across the country – all while creating almost 200,000 jobs.”

EPA’s WIFIA loans will allow communities across the country to implement projects to address national water priorities – including providing for clean and safe drinking water by reducing exposure to lead and emerging contaminants, addressing aging water infrastructure and developing water recycling and reuse projects. Specifically, eight of the selected projects are water reuse or recycling projects, 11 projects will reduce lead or emerging drinking water contaminants, and 33 will address aging infrastructure. EPA received 51 letters of interest from both public and private entities in response to the 2019 WIFIA Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). After a robust, statutorily required review process, the WIFIA Selection Committee chose the following 38 prospective borrowers’ projects to submit applications for loans:

- City of Phoenix (Arizona): Zone 3D and 4A Improvements Program; \$172 million
- City of San Mateo (California): Basins 2 and 3 Collection System Improvements Project; \$85 million
- Soquel Creek Water District (California): Pure Water Soquel; \$49 million
- City of Oceanside (California): Buccaneer Sewer Lift Station and Force Main Project; \$47 million
- City of Oceanside (California): Pure Water Oceanside and Lower Recycled Water Distribution System Expansion Project; \$57 million
- South Coast Water District (California): Doheny Ocean Desalination Project; \$60 million
- Monterey One Water (California): Pure Water Monterey Groundwater Replenishment Project; \$44 million

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- Poseidon Resources LP (Channelside, California): Huntington Beach Desalination Plant; \$585 million
- City of Daly City (California): Vista Grande Drainage Basin Improvement Project; \$61 million
- City of Roseville (California): Roseville’s Water Future Initiative; \$37 million
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (California): Southeast Plant New Headworks Facility Project; \$236 million
- San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (California): Jones Pumping Plant Unit Motor Rehabilitation Project; \$19 million
- Vallejo Flood & Wastewater District (California): Secondary Effluent Project; \$12 million
- East County Advanced Water Purification Joint Powers Authority (California): Water Purification Project; \$342 million
- Polk Regional Water Cooperative (Florida): Alternative Water Supplies Program; \$235 million
- Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (Florida): South District Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion; \$223 million
- City of Atlanta (Georgia): Water Distribution System Resiliency Program; \$35 million
- City of Joliet (Illinois): Joliet Alternative Water Source Program; loan amount TBD
- Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (Louisiana): Sewer System Evaluation & Rehabilitation Program; \$111 million
- Baltimore City Department of Public Works (Maryland): Water Infrastructure Rehabilitation; \$209 million
- Baltimore City Department of Public Works (Maryland): Wastewater Infrastructure Rehabilitation; \$129 million

- Baltimore City Department of Public Works (Maryland): Stormwater Management Project; \$54 million
- Downriver Utility Wastewater Authority (Michigan): Biosolids Dryer Facility & Other Critical Projects; \$13 million
- New Jersey Infrastructure Bank (New Jersey): Infrastructure Bank Pool; \$149 million
- Greenville Utilities Commission (North Carolina): GUC Water Treatment Plant Phase 1 Upgrades; \$29 million
- Metro Flood Diversion Authority (North Dakota): Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Flood Risk Management Project; \$561 million
- City of Beaverton (Oregon): Water Supply Improvement Program; \$58 million
- City of Portland (Oregon): Bull Run Treatment Program; \$554 million
- Narragansett Bay Commission (Rhode Island): Bucklin Point Resiliency Improvements; \$17 million
- Bristol County Water Authority (Rhode Island): Pawtucket Pipeline; \$26 million
- Columbia Power & Water Systems (Tennessee): Long Term Water Supply Program; \$106 million
- Salt Lake City (Utah), Department of Public Utilities: Water Reclamation Facility Nutrient Project; \$355 million
- City of Alexandria (Virginia), Virginia, Sanitation Authority: Tunnel System; \$189 million
- Hampton Roads Sanitation District (Virginia): Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow; \$930 million
- City of Newport News (Virginia), Waterworks Department: Advance Metering Infrastructure Project; \$24 million

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•City of Tacoma Sewer Utility (Washington): Central Wastewater Treatment Plant Electrical Distribution System Replacement Project; \$17 million

•King County (Washington): Ship Canal Water Quality Project; \$98 million

•City of Wausau (Wisconsin): Drinking Water System Treatment Facility Project; \$22 million

Six prospective borrowers that submitted letters of interest in response to a previous WIFIA Notice of Funding Availability resubmitted them for 2019 and have been invited to proceed in the 2019 funding round. Eight borrowers who have already received a WIFIA loan or are in the process of closing a loan have been invited to apply for additional financing this round. WIFIA is also expanding its geographic scope by inviting entities from seven states that had not previously received WIFIA funding: Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, North Dakota, Utah, and Virginia. To learn more about the 38 projects that are invited to apply, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/wifia/wifia-selected-projects>.

### ***Background***

Established by the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014, the WIFIA program is a federal loan and guarantee program administered by EPA. WIFIA's aim is to accelerate investment in the nation's water infrastructure by providing long-term and low-cost supplemental credit assistance for regionally and nationally significant projects. EPA's WIFIA program plays an important part in President Trump's infrastructure plan, which calls for expanding project eligibility. The WIFIA program has an active pipeline of pending applications for projects that will result in billions of dollars in water infrastructure investment and thousands of jobs.

For more information about the WIFIA program, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/wifia>.

## **USDA Seeks Public Comments on Conservation Practice Standard Updates**

NRCS 10/28/19. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking public comments on 13 conservation practice standards. Per direction from the 2018 Farm Bill, NRCS will gather feedback on 94 practices over the coming months through posting on the Federal Register. Comments on these current 13 practice standards are due by Friday, November 22.

These standards provide guidelines for planning, designing, installing, operating and maintaining conservation practices. The 13 updated conservation practice standards are:

Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332)

Dam, Diversion (Code 348)

Deep Tillage (Code 324)

Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery (Code 447)

Irrigation Canal or Lateral (Code 320)

Irrigation Ditch Lining (Code 428)

Irrigation Field Ditch (Code 388)

Irrigation Reservoir (Code 436)

Land Clearing (Code 460)

Obstruction Removal (Code 500)

Surface Roughening (Code 609)

Waste Treatment (Code 629)

Waterspreading (Code 640)

NRCS helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners plan and implement conservation practices to help them meet their business and natural resource needs. Farm Bill-funded programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives

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Program help cover the costs for planning and implementing practices.

NRCS enlisted the public's help and comments on how to improve conservation practice standards back in March of this year. These current updates are based on that valuable feedback and NRCS's efforts to improve the standards to meet the needs of the nation's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

Improvements to the conservation practice standards include expanding and updating the scope for new technology and increasing opportunities to establish or improve on habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects. Revisions also involved formatting and writing style updates to meet current agency requirements and editing text to improve clarity.

### ***Submitting Comments***

Copies of the proposed revised standards are available through <http://www.regulations.gov> offsite link image by accessing Docket No. NRCS-2019-0011. Alternatively, the proposed revised standards can be downloaded or printed from <http://go.usa.gov/TXye>.

When submitting comments, please include the volume, date and page number of this issue of the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> offsite link image and search for docket ID NRCS-2019-0011. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

Mail, or Hand Delivery: Mr. Bill Reck, National Environmental Engineer, Conservation Engineering Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS, 1400 Independence Avenue, South Building, Room 6136, Washington, D.C. 20250.

### ***More Information***

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On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed into law the 2018 Farm Bill, which provides income support, certainty and stability to our nation's farmers, ranchers and land stewards by enhancing farm support programs, improving crop insurance, maintaining disaster programs and promoting and supporting voluntary conservation.

NRCS is using comments as part of updating standards. For more information on how NRCS is implementing the Farm Bill, visit NRCS' Federal Register Notices webpage or [farmers.gov/farmbill](http://farmers.gov/farmbill) offsite link image.

The deadline for submitting comments was corrected in this release to Friday, November 22.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

### [Western Governors Association 2019 Winter Meeting](#)

Las Vegas, NV  
December 13-14, 2019

### [Western Governors Association 2020 Annual Meeting](#)

Medora, ND  
June 29-July 2, 2020

### [WSWC Spring \(192<sup>nd</sup>\) Meetings](#)

Washington, DC  
March – April, 2020

### [WSWC Summer \(193<sup>rd</sup>\) Meetings](#)

Cody, WY  
July 2020

## **Upcoming Events**

### [WestFAST Webinar: October 19, 2018, Presidential Memorandum on Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West.](#)

Tuesday, December 16, 10AM Mountain

### [World Water-Tech North America](#)

Los Angeles, CA  
October 29-30, 2019

[2019 Annual Water Resources Conference, AWRA](#)  
Salt Lake City, UT  
November 3-6, 2019

[National Water Resources Association Conference](#)  
Houston, TX  
November 6-8, 2019

[Association of California Water Agencies Conference](#)  
San Diego, CA  
December 3-6, 2019

[American Geophysical Union Meeting – NASA WWAO Science to Action Session – Enabling Science and Data Driven Water Decisions](#)  
San Francisco, CA  
December 9-13, 2019

## Other Federal News

DOI 10/01/19. [Secretary Bernhardt Applauds President Trump's Intent to Nominate Katharine MacGregor to be the Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior](#)

EPA 10/01/19. [EPA finalizes cleanup plan for Ballard Mine](#)

NOAA 10/01/19. [NOAA awards \\$10.2 million for harmful algal bloom research. Projects will help improve efforts to protect marine resources, public health and coastal economies](#)

NOAA/NIDIS 10/01/19. [National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook - Outlook Period– October, November, and December 2019 through January 2020](#)

NOAA/NIDIS 10/02/19. [Have You Thought About Drought?](#)

NOAA 10/02/19. [Flash Flood Warnings now issued in easy-to-read format. Wireless Emergency](#)

[Alerts for flash flooding reserved for most life-threatening events](#)

EPA 10/03/19. [EPA Recognizes Leaders in Reducing Water Waste](#)

NOAA/NIDIS 10/03/19. [Predicting Flash Drought](#)

WHITE HOUSE 10/04/19. [President Donald J. Trump Approves Texas Disaster Declaration](#)

EPA 10/07/19. [Statement from EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler on the Water Infrastructure Funding Transfer Act](#)

EPA 10/07/19. [Administrator Wheeler Participates in Senator Cramer's WOTUS Roundtable with North Dakota Leaders](#)

EPA 10/07/19. [U.S. EPA reaches settlements to study and mitigate indoor air and groundwater contamination in Sunnyvale, California](#)

NOAA 10/07/19. [Heat waves could increase substantially in size by mid-century, says new study](#)

WHITE HOUSE 10/07/19. [President Donald J. Trump Approves South Dakota Disaster Declaration](#)

EPA 10/08/19. [ICYMI: In North Dakota visit, EPA chief vows new Waters of the US definition to 'stand the test of time'](#)

EPA 10/08/19. [Administrator Wheeler Signs MOU with Governor Burgum, Makes Fargo WIFIA Announcement](#)

NOAA 10/08/19. [Marine Heat Wave Reminiscent of 'the Blob' Lingers off U.S. West Coast](#)

NOAA 10/08/19. [So what are marine heat waves? A NOAA scientist explains](#)

NOAA 10/08/19. [NOAA awards \\$4.4 million for research on sea level rise and flooding. Multiyear awards to help coastal communities improve resilience](#)

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NOAA 10/08/19. [Dive Into NOAA's Treasure Trove of Data](#)

USF&WS 10/08/19. [Service, Partners to Provide More Than \\$18 Million for Fish Habitat Conservation Projects in 34 States](#)

EPA 10/09/19. [EPA commemorates \\$640 million in water infrastructure loans to Tualatin Valley Water District and the city of Hillsboro](#)

EPA 10/09/19. [EPA chief's North Dakota visit capped with Fargo-Moorhead Diversion announcement](#)

EPA 10/09/19. [Media Advisory: EPA Makes Water Policy Announcement](#)

NOAA 10/09/19. [NOAA's Climate Program Office awards \\$22.8M to advance climate understanding and prediction, enhance resilience](#)

NPS 10/09/19. [National Park Service Plan Approved to Protect Native Aquatic Species in the Colorado River](#)

NOAA 10/10/19. [NOAA to issue U.S. Winter Outlook on October 17](#)

RECLAMATION 10/11/19. [Reclamation, SLDMWA complete reviews of alternatives to address potential Bay-Delta water supply shortages](#)

USDA 10/16/19. [USDA Invests in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements in 31 States](#)

NOAA 10/16/19. [September 2019 tied as hottest on record for planet. Arctic sea ice coverage shrank to third-lowest for September](#)

RECLAMATION 10/16/19. [Reclamation awards \\$1 million in CALFED grants to improve water reliability, enhance environment](#)

NOAA 10/17/19. [New temperature product improves global climate monitoring](#)

NOAA 10/17/19. [Winter Outlook: Warmer than average for many, wetter in the North; Drought improvement expected in the Southeast](#)

RECLAMATION 10/17/19. [Reclamation to hold public meetings for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply Project](#)

RECLAMATION 10/21/19. [Fisheries services deliver biological opinions on proposed CVP water project operations](#)

RECLAMATION 10/22/19. [Reclamation reduces salinity and improves water quality in western slope canals](#)

RECLAMATION 10/24/19. [Reclamation exchange program for Mendota Pool Group offers affordable, reliable water for farmers](#)

EPA 10/25/19. [Wyoming Valley Communities have Flexibility in Implementing their Stormwater Program](#)

FS 10/30/19. [Forest Service continues work on proposed NEPA rule to improve forest, grassland conditions](#)

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