

Senator John Kennedy
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, Appropriations
United States Senate

Representative Chuck Fleischmann
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, Appropriations
United States Senate

Representative Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

UPDATED June 27, 2025

RE: Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Funding for FY2026

Dear Senators Kennedy and Murray and Representatives Fleischmann and Kaptur,

The undersigned 103 stakeholders representing water management and use, agriculture, business, outdoor recreation, conservation, and other interests write to request your support for robust annual funding for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART program in the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations process for Energy and Water Development.

The popular and competitive WaterSMART program is a cornerstone of Reclamation's mission to manage, develop, and protect water and energy resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner for millions of Americans. WaterSMART supports cost-shared funding for projects that further activities core to Reclamation's mission, ensuring water availability and conservation, drought planning and response, energy security, habitat restoration, irrigation modernization, and improved fish passage that support the recovery and delisting of endangered species, as well as other similar projects that help address the most pressing water challenges in the western United States. Most WaterSMART projects require at least 50 percent cost sharing to leverage non-federal financial resources. To date, Reclamation has selected 2,364 projects and plans, to be funded with \$3.28 billion in WaterSMART funding, in conjunction with \$8.75 billion in non-federal funding, across the western states.¹ Completed WaterSMART projects are saving an estimated 1.7 million acre-feet per year; enough water for more than 4.6 million people.

In particular, we support continued FY2026 funding for WaterSMART programs **at FY2024 funding levels or above**, including: \$15.017 million for Basin Studies; \$8 million for Cooperative Watershed Management; \$30 million for Drought Response and Comprehensive

¹ Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program Data Portal, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/bf5c5357e7044e0c80d5a55788d1db34/>.

Drought Plans; \$30 million for Title XVI Program (water recycling and reuse); \$6.5 million for Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program; and \$54 million for WaterSMART Grants.

Projects funded by the WaterSMART program often provide the dual benefit of water savings and ecosystem benefits, resulting in a high return on investment. The projects funded by these programs are essential to building drought resilience in a hotter and drier West, including ensuring the safe, reliable, and efficient management of water resources for people and agriculture. Furthermore, WaterSMART-funded projects play an integral part in supporting local communities in their wildfire preparedness efforts.

Federally funded WaterSMART projects have reduced risks associated with natural disasters, increased water security, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved agricultural resiliency, and created jobs, especially in rural communities. These federal funds are also crucial in addressing the immense need for water infrastructure investments in the West, which exceeds the capacity of states and local governments to finance on their own. As drought conditions continue to intensify, sustained, annual funding for these activities is more important than ever.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Water Efficiency
Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
American Rivers
Amigos Bravos
Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
Arizona Wildlife Federation
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)
Bernalillo County Natural Resource
Services
Blua Consulting LLC
Burbank Water and Power
California Farm Bureau
California Water Efficiency Partnership
Calleguas Municipal Water District
Cavanaugh
Citrus Heights Water District
City of Beverly Hills
City of Fullerton
City of Peoria
City of Round Rock, Texas
City of Santa Barbara

City of Santa Rosa
City of Surprise - Arizona
City of Thornton, Colorado
City of Vacaville Utilities Department
Coconino Plateau Watershed Partnership
Colorado River Board of California
Colorado Wildlife Federation
Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma
Conservation Northwest (WA)
ConserveTrack, LLC
County of Santa Barbara Water Resources
Cucamonga Valley Water District
Eastern Municipal Water District
Ecoblue® | Water is life.
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Incentives
Family Farm Alliance
Farmers Conservation Alliance
Gallatin River Task Force
Green Builder Coalition

Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting and
the Outdoors (HECHO)
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Imperial Irrigation District
Irrigation Association
Irvine Ranch Water District
Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
Laguna Beach County Water District
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
Liberty
Long Beach Utilities Department
Mesa Water District
Metropolitan Water District of Southern
California
Monterey Peninsula Water Management
District
Municipal Water District of Orange County
National Association of Clean Water
Agencies
National Association of Landscape
Professionals
National Audubon Society
National Water Resources Association
National Wildlife Federation
Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
North Dakota Wildlife Federation
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Padre Dam Municipal Water District
Rancho California Water District
Regional Water Providers Consortium
Sacramento Suburban Water District
San Diego County Water Authority
San Dieguito Water District
Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency
Seattle Public Utilities, City of Seattle
Sonoma County Water Agency
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
South Tahoe Public Utility District

Southern Nevada Water Authority
Southwestern Water Conservation District
Texas Conservation Alliance
The Nature Conservancy
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership
Three Valleys Municipal Water District
Town of Gilbert
Town of Queen Creek
Trout Unlimited
Universal Access to Clean Water for Tribal
Communities
Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water
District
Utah Division of Water Resources
Utah Water Ways
Utah Wildlife Federation
Vallecitos Water District
Walnut Valley Water District
WaterNow Alliance
Watershed Management Group
Weber Basin Water Conservancy District
West Basin Municipal Water District
Western Agriculture and Conservation
Coalition
Western Landowners Alliance
Western Municipal Water District
Western Resource Advocates
World Wildlife Fund
Wyoming Wildlife Federation