



## U.S. Geological Survey Funding

**SUPPORT** full funding for the USGS Cooperative Water Program (CWP) to return to a 50% federal/50% non-federal cost share in Texas. A plus-up of \$2.9 million from the Administration's FY2009 budget, earmarked for Texas streamgaging, would restore the 50/50 balance.

**SUPPORT** full funding in Texas for the USGS National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP). A plus-up of \$2.7 million from the Administration's FY2009 budget, earmarked for Texas NSIP streamgaging, would ensure a core network of streamgages in the state.

**SUMMARY:** Data provided by the USGS is critical for planning and management of Texas water resources, as described in a 2006 report by the National Hydrologic Warning Council entitled "Benefits of USGS Streamgaging Program."<sup>1</sup> The USGS streamgages provide long-term invaluable hydrological data for state and local officials managing water resources. Continued reductions in the Cooperative Water Program federal budget for USGS streamgaging and investigations jeopardize flood response as well as planning and managing for droughts, water supply, irrigation, water rights, fisheries, and recreation.

**BACKGROUND:** The state of Texas enjoys a sterling reputation for comprehensive water resources planning. Planning of this importance and magnitude requires a base knowledge of the quantity and quality of the state's water resources.

Water resources data are vital to ensure economic development, public health and environmental protection. The USGS CWP is a critical component to this base of knowledge, but the federal portion of funding for streamgaging under CWP has been steadily declining for the past several years. CWP is vital to water resources planning as it provides data for flood warnings and characterization, provides flow measurements to maximize hydropower generation, and helps to reduce pollutant loads and address environmental concerns. CWP originally funded streamgages and investigations at a cost share of 50 percent federal and 50 percent non-federal.

Recent flat funding levels and reductions by Congress, coupled with cost increases due to inflation have led to a current cost share of approximately 33 percent federal and 67 percent non-federal. The result has been the annual loss of approximately 70 streamgaging stations nationwide. Over the past decade, more than 1,100 stations, many with over 30 years of continuous operation, have been lost. Another 216 stations are currently at risk due to inadequate funding<sup>2</sup>. At a time when water supply, emergency management, and environmental monitoring are increasingly critical, the continued erosion of basic data collection compromises our national and state interests.

In constant dollar terms, USGS funding for streamgages and investigations through the CWP has been reduced over the past several years. The costs of the program, however, continue to increase, primarily due to inflation and salary increases at USGS. Consequently, a disproportionate extent of the increase in costs is borne by local cooperators and states like Texas. This disparity in funding belies the fact that USGS and other federal interests receive equal and perhaps greater benefit from the data collected from streamgages.

As a result of the reduction in the federal cost share, local and state cooperators must make the difficult choice to either: (1) disproportionately increase funding to maintain current streamgage stations, or (2) eliminate certain streamgage sites.

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The elimination of streamgages can be devastating for the data record that supports technical analysis and planning. An opportunity to collect data in one year or several years cannot be recaptured at a later time. Data used for analysis and planning are most valuable in determining trends and projections, but such benefit is diluted considerably if the data history is not complete or has gaps in it.

The devastating impact of a reduced data capability is not exclusive to local and state jurisdictions. Science at the federal level is also adversely affected. For example, emergency management personnel depend upon the accessibility and accuracy of streamflow information. During flood events, streamgages actively measure the flows, allowing emergency management personnel to plan and respond promptly. It is in the national interest to have a single integrated system providing real-time and historical stream flow information for all users, including water managers, emergency managers, recreational water users, engineers, and scientists. The CWP is intended to fulfill that purpose. Without an increase in funding for CWP, approximately 70 streamgaging stations will be lost annually nationwide, at a time when such

data stations should be growing, not decreasing. This continued eroding of basic data collection compromises all aspects of water supply, flood warning and environmental protection.

In addition to CWP, the USGS, with guidance from the National Research Council (NRC), developed the NSIP to design a base streamflow network of federally funded streamgages in the United States expressly to ensure long-term viability for national needs. The NRC deems stream flow data a “public good” because many national interests are served by having access to this information. NSIP is designed to ensure that a core network of streamgages, identified because they are of national importance, remains active and is not subject to state and local funding fluctuations. NSIP has not been fully funded in Texas or in any other state.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> [www.nhwc.udfed.org/PDF/nhwc\\_nsip\\_phaseA.pdf](http://www.nhwc.udfed.org/PDF/nhwc_nsip_phaseA.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nfdaflood.com/PDFs/StreamgageCoalitionHouseTestimonyFY08.PDF](http://www.nfdaflood.com/PDFs/StreamgageCoalitionHouseTestimonyFY08.PDF)

