

## Summary: Priority Water Issues for Texas

Water is critical to the economy of Texas and the nation. Understanding that the nation now faces a financial crisis that will impact the federal budget and require the skill of Congress in stimulating the economy, members of the Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA) from across the state urge Congress to recognize the immediate and long-term economic benefits of funding water infrastructure projects.

### U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY FUNDING

**SUMMARY:** Data provided by U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) streamgages are critical for planning and managing Texas water resource issues and providing a long-term set of invaluable hydrological data for state and local water resources officials. Continued reductions in the federal budget for funding USGS streamgaging jeopardizes flood response, as well as planning and managing for droughts, water supply, irrigation, water rights, fisheries, and recreation.

The data provided by the USGS Cooperative Water Program (CWP) has been an integral component of Texas' successful planning and management of water resources issues, as described in the 2006 report by the National Hydrologic Warning Council entitled "Benefits of USGS Streamgaging Program." The USGS CWP provides invaluable long-term hydrological data for state and local water resource managers. Support for the USGS CWP in the federal budget enhances water infrastructure planning and development, flood response, drought management, water supply, irrigation, water rights, fisheries, and recreation.

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 originally funded streamgages at a cost share of 50 percent federal and 50 percent non-federal. At a time when monitoring water supply for emergency management and environmental purposes is increasingly critical, the continued erosion of basic data collection compromises our national interests.

◆ **REQUEST:** A \$60 million increase above FY 2008 funding, specifically for the U.S. Geological Survey's Investigations and Research Account for the Cooperative Water Program, part of the FY 2010 Interior and Environment spending bill.

### TEIP AND WRDA FUNDING

**SUMMARY:** The Texas Environmental Infrastructure Program (TEIP) was established to provide local, state, and federal partnerships to implement water projects identified in Texas' State Water Plan. Funding of these projects offers the best investment in Texas' water needs, and will immediately stimulate economic activity while helping to sustain the future growth of the state. The Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA), with members representing both state and local partners, urges Congress to appropriate full funding of the \$40 million authorized for the TEIP under the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007, Section 5138.

It is particularly important that Environmental Infrastructure (EI) projects, which include many priority projects for Texas, be funded and "new starts" be allowed. Because TEIP projects are both infrastructure-based and ready to proceed, providing funding for these projects will immediately boost the Texas economy by creating construction jobs, as well as long-term jobs for project operations. TWCA also strongly urges Congress to include language in the economic stimulus bill and future appropriations that will allow funding for previously unauthorized projects or new starts.

◆ **REQUEST:** Make appropriation of the Environmental Infrastructure projects in WRDA 2007 (\$40 million) one of your highest priorities for FY 2010 Energy & Water Appropriations Subcommittee requests.

◆ **REQUEST:** Work with the Manager of the economic recovery bill (Stimulus) to allow projects considered "new starts" to receive funding that otherwise meet the criteria for economic stimulus.

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### SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLIES

Water reuse, water conservation, and desalination of brackish groundwater, inland surface water, and seawater are three sustainable methods for enhancing water supplies. Federal assistance is needed to support efforts to expand the science and technology and implement projects.

- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Streamlining of federal programs and increased federal funding for innovative and sustainable methods of enhancing water supplies, including reuse, conservation and desalination.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Additional funding and broadening of BOR's Title XVI Program and agricultural water conservation projects.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Additional funding for EPA's Research Grant Program, State Revolving Funds program, and Alliance for Water Efficiency.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** The SECURE Water Act (S.2156) as a model for a comprehensive approach to sustainable water management.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Capital funding for developing new drought-proof water supplies through seawater, brackish groundwater, and brackish surface water desalination.

### CONTROLLING INVASIVE AQUATIC PLANTS

Invasive plants in Texas wastefully consume large amounts of water and upset the ecosystem. The unchecked growth of giant salvinia, water hyacinth, hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil seriously diminish water supply, water quality, hydropower production, flood control, navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife benefits, property values, and even human life and health. Federal help is needed to address problems caused by invasive plant species through (1) financial assistance with operational control of existing problems and (2) technical assistance in developing and implementing scientifically sound, ecosystem-based management strategies for restoring native plant communities in weed-infested water bodies.

- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Funding for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' aquatic plant control and research programs: \$5 million for the Aquatic Plan Control (APC) cost-share efforts; \$5 million for the Aquatic Plant Control Research Program (APCRP); and \$2 million for innovative approaches to solving non-indigenous aquatic plant problems.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Full funding of the Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act of 2004.

### FEMA FUNDING FOR FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT, AND DAM AND LEVEE SAFETY

Historically, floods are the most frequent, destructive, and costly natural hazard facing Texas, constituting 90 percent of total damage from all disasters. From 1975 to 1998, Texas recorded \$10.2 billion in property damage from floods alone. Texas' population is projected to grow by almost 60 percent by the year 2030. Today, the state faces the challenges of high flood losses, an increasing risk of flooding events, and rapid population growth that is putting more people and property in harm's way.

- ◆ **SUPPORT:** FEMA FY2009-2010 budget and efforts in the 111th Congress to protect the integrity of the National Flood Insurance Program and fund RiskMap (follow-up to Map Modernization) at a level of \$400 million per year.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Reintroduction of the National Dam Rehabilitation and Repair Act of 2007 (HR 3224 in 110th) to rehabilitate non-federal dams that fail to meet minimum safety standards and pose an unacceptable risk to the public.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Reauthorization of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL 83-566), Small Watershed Dams Rehabilitation Program at \$50 million per year for 4 years.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** US ACE FY2009 budget funding requests for the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, Title IX, authorizing a National Levee Safety Program to conduct a survey of levees throughout the United States, including Texas, on a cost-shared basis.

### INNOVATIVE FINANCING

There is a growing need for new investments in water supply and treatment facilities projects, as well as rehabilitation of aging water infrastructure. Tax-exempt and tax-credit bonds can encourage private capital to assist in financing certain kinds of water related infrastructure, such as desalination, water recycling or groundwater clean-up facilities, without relying on congressionally appropriated dollars. Congress should embrace this opportunity to provide tax subsidies to finance innovative technologies that will provide substantial new sources of clean water.

- ◆ **SUPPORT:** The Texas Water Conservation Association urges Congress to restore air and water pollution control facilities to Section 142 of the IRC that were included prior to the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1986.
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Clean Renewable Water Supply Bonds (legislation similar to H.R. 3452 from the 110th Congress is expected to be filed).
- ◆ **SUPPORT:** Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Act of 2009 (H.R. 537).