

BUDGET ISSUES: USGS National Streamflow Network Funding & Modernizing

For many decades, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program has provided accurate and reliable scientific information critical to Texas water management.

The National Streamflow Network offers many uses. USGS data is used by water supply managers, water quality administrators, emergency responders, recreationists, and many others to forecast and respond to flooding, drought, and other extreme events. When streamgauge data is coupled with mapping and other data sets, it can save lives by producing a much needed and highly effective Flood Early Warning System.

This data is also used in the design and operation of bridges, reservoirs, flood infrastructure, flood warning, energy generation, fisheries, and recreation. The USGS groundwater and streamflow networks provide information critical to the function of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other federal and state agencies. The information these networks provide is essential to congressional oversight and to inform revision of federal laws. TWCA members rely on the National Streamflow Network for real-time measurements of the water level and flow of rivers and tributaries. This information is vital to make timely and critical water supply decisions on a daily basis.

Funding for full implementation of the USGS Federal Priority Stream Network, formerly referred to as the National Streamflow Information Program, would increase the number of federal priority streamgages in Texas from 158 to 430, benefitting the entities mentioned above.

Growing local burdens despite widespread benefits. Recently, the local match requirement for the Cooperative Matching Funds program, which funds projects that improve water resources data, increased from 50% to 65% for Texas and other states. This creates a much heavier burden on the local resources of TWCA members, who provide funding for 66% of USGS stream gauges, despite many other entities who benefit from the data.

Outdated streamflow networks and data delivery. Much of the nation's current streamgaging network is based on outdated technology, some as much as 70 to 80 years old. Innovation is needed to effectively measure, monitor, and understand national water resources. The Next Generation Water Observation System uses innovative data collection and delivery, which will ease decision making for emergencies and daily water operations. The build-out of Next Generation Water Observing System will focus monitoring in 10 basins nationwide to improve estimations and forecasting of the water supply in many ungaged areas.

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REQUESTS:

Support continued funding increases for the USGS Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program. This program is important to provide a reliable, core set of streamgauge information.

Complete the USGS Federal Priority Streamgauge Network. Full funding would require about \$126 million.

Return the USGS Cooperative Matching Funds to a 50-50 cost-share match. The federal cost for matching 50/50 cost-share investments in the cooperative program would be approximately \$150 million.

Enhance data collection and modernize the data delivery system. TWCA estimates \$30.9 million is needed in fiscal year 2021 for the Next Generation Water Observing System to add additional planned basins, operate and maintain existing sites, and continue modernization of USGS data management, integration, and delivery infrastructure.

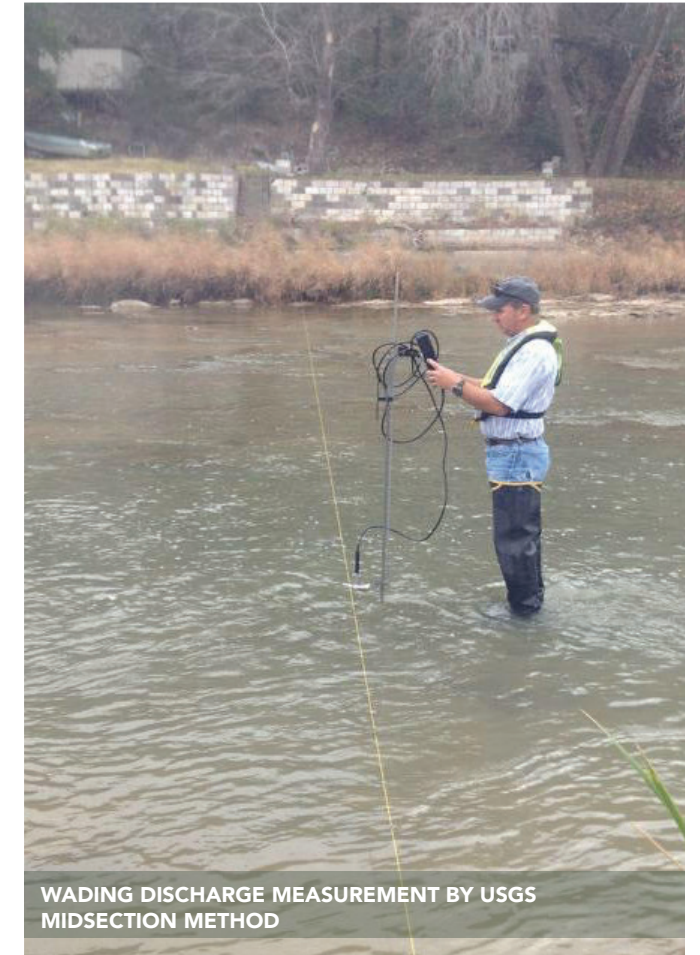


Table 1.

USGS Program	FY 2021 President's Budget (millions)	FY 2021 TWCA Request For Full Funding (millions)	Difference (millions)
Federal Priority Streamgauge Network	\$24.7	\$126.0	\$101.3
Cooperative Matching Funds	\$58.2	\$150.0	\$91.8
Next Generation Water Observation System	\$5.5	\$30.9	\$25.4