

Report to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

Distribution of Additional FY 2022 Funding for Water and Related Resources, Bureau of Reclamation

Summary

The Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 117-43) provided the Bureau of Reclamation with a total of \$210,000,000 in Water & Related Resources to address drought (\$200,000,000) and for fire remediation and suppression emergency assistance related to wildfires (\$10,000,000). The Act requested that “Reclamation shall provide a monthly report directly to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate detailing the allocation and obligation of these funds, beginning not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act.”

As requested, the Bureau of Reclamation has allocated funding to projects within the Water and Related Resources account to address drought and fire disaster efforts throughout the western U.S. Reclamation based its decisions on a thorough review at the regional, program and west-wide levels to ensure a balanced approach that considered disaster response needs of projects and programs, while adhering to existing authorizations and mission priorities.

Addressing Western Drought

P.L. 117-43 provided Reclamation with \$200,000,000 for drought-related programs and projects in direct response to the continued, extraordinary drought impacting the West. In allocating these funds, Reclamation considered emergency response actions in response to current or recent conditions, and drought resilience actions to enhance drought preparedness into the future. In addition, extrapolating from the need for immediate funding to address recent emergent hydrological events, Reclamation is also reserving a portion of the funds for the highly probable unforeseen exigencies occurring in the coming months. Overall considerations used in the decision-making included:

- Consideration of disaster emergencies “for fire remediation and suppression emergency assistance related to wildfires;”
- Ongoing drought mitigation, drought resiliency activities, or drought risk prevention/reduction;
- Consideration of Reclamation’s ability to fulfill or complete efforts or discrete segments of the efforts to address fire and drought disasters;
- Continued focus on public safety;
- Consideration as to financial feasibility, such as the acceleration of drought response actions, which would achieve more efficient schedules, probable cost reductions and an earlier realization of project benefits;

- Consideration of near-term positive impacts to communities.

Throughout the West, the effects of drought are severe, long lasting, and require multiple years to recover. Drought analyses, combined with projections of future hydroclimate conditions, suggest that drought severity and duration will increase across the West in the coming century. Climate change poses a growing risk to effective water management in the Western United States. The geographical areas and programs most impacted in this regard include California's Central Valley region, the Klamath Basin in Oregon/California, and the Colorado River Basin.

The ongoing drought response needs in these and other Reclamation areas were heavily weighted in making the allocation decisions represented in the attached distribution list. Highlights include funds in the amount of \$27.2 million, to be provided to the Lower Colorado River Operations Program to continue the implementation of Drought Contingency Plan activities, while \$14.0 million is provided to shore up water firming rights for Tribal communities during times of shortage in the Central Arizona water supply. Funding in the amount of \$7.0 million is provided for the state of Washington to address drought mitigating infrastructure investments through Yakima Project and Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program. Funds in the amount of \$61.8 million are provided to California's Central Valley Project to address ongoing drought needs throughout the region, which has been profoundly affected by the worsening drought. Reclamation's allocation maintains the maximum flexibility to respond quickly to the greatest water needs—or those that affect the largest population—that are triggered by this year's hydrology. In other areas, Reclamation decisions have benefits in drought-related infrastructure investments, water supplies, endangered species commitments, and advanced drought related modeling.

Furthermore, drought conditions throughout the West highlight the need for extensive planning and work to make Reclamation areas more resilient to withstand future water resource scarcity and variability as well as to maintain healthy ecosystems. The WaterSMART Drought Response program addresses the unprecedented drought in much of the western U.S by helping local water suppliers increase their systems' resilience to the impacts of drought and climate change and provides multiple avenues for implementing adaptation strategies. A total of \$20.0 million has been allocated for these efforts. Finally, Reclamation is reserving \$35.0 million of the drought funding—to be used during the current fiscal year—thereby providing the maximum flexibility possible to address emergent hydrological disasters as the FY 2022 water year develops and unforeseen crises become manifest.

Fire Remediation and Suppression Emergency Assistance

P.L. 117-43 provided Reclamation with \$10,000,000 for fire remediation and suppression emergency assistance activities related to wildfires. Climate change and dry hydrologic patterns have made wildfires more frequent and extreme in recent years, where the devastating impacts have dire effects in Reclamation areas. The Sonoma-Lake Napa Unit (LNU) Lightning Complex fires ravaged much of the Northern California in 2020, while the Bridge, Monument and Caldor fires have had destructive impacts in 2021. The 2020 wildfire season in Colorado was the most destructive season on record. The allocation of the \$10,000,000 provided in P.L. 117-43 is reflected in the attached distribution list.