

PRESS RELEASE

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Western Groups Call for Increased Funding for Federal Water Management, Infrastructure

Local agencies ask President to beef up waning Bureau of Reclamation budget

Washington, D.C. -- Organizations representing hundreds of agricultural and urban water agencies have called on President Bush to reverse years of declining budgets for the Bureau of Reclamation, an Interior Department agency that operates scores of federal irrigation, flood control and hydroelectric projects in 17 western states.

In a letter to the President, eight western water groups said that the budget for the Bureau of Reclamation has fallen 36 percent over the past 10 years despite the demands placed on an aging water resources infrastructure by rapid population growth, greater environmental mandates and recurring drought conditions.

“As the Bureau of Reclamation nears its 100th anniversary, it is an agency without adequate resources to carry out a mission that is more complex and vital than ever before” the groups said. They also pointed to an estimated \$5 billion backlog of work needed to maintain Bureau facilities and new work that has been or soon will be authorized by Congress.

They asked the President to send Congress a plan to increase the Bureau’s project and program funding to \$1 billion annually by fiscal 2005. (The FY 2001 funding level is \$648 million). The groups said that the increase is necessary to ensure “solid progress for agricultural, environmental and urban water needs, and to head off water shortages in the entire western United States.”

The letter is signed by the Western Coalition of Arid States, the WateReuse Association, the Family Farm Alliance, the National Urban Agriculture Council, National Water Resources Association, Association of California Water Agencies, Oregon Water Resources Congress and the Idaho Water Users Association.

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