



September 11, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2402

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
437 Russell Senate Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Interior,  
Environment and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
531 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

Re: FY18 Budget for U.S. Geological Survey Programs Supporting Water Quality and  
Water Resources in the California Bay-Delta

Dear Senators:

The Bay Area Clean Water Agencies (BACWA) is a joint powers agency whose members own and operate publicly-owned treatment works (POTWs) and sanitary sewer collection systems that collectively provide sanitary services to over 7.1 million people in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. BACWA Members are public agencies, governed by elected officials and managed by professionals who protect the environment and public health. BACWA members believe that environmental regulations should be based on sound scientific investigations and therefore strongly supports federal programs that provide scientific data essential to a science-based regulatory process. The purpose of this letter is to provide information for your considerations in adoption of the Federal budget. The President's FY18 budget proposes to decrease funding for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) by \$163M, or approximately 15%, to \$922M. These cuts would reduce or eliminate critical USGS programs in the California Bay-Delta. Funding for these programs in the California Bay-Delta in FY17 was \$7.57M. For the reasons stated below, the data collected by these programs are critical for water supply, agriculture, and wastewater decisions affecting tens of millions of people. Maintaining funds for the USGS programs in the California Bay-Delta at least equivalent to the FY17 enacted level would allow these programs to continue.

Water quality in the California Bay-Delta is important to millions of people. Conditions in the Bay-Delta are important for the water supply for 40 million people and irrigation for agricultural production. Agricultural production in the Central Valley upstream of the Bay is responsible for one-quarter of the Nation's food supply. Nearly 50% of the exports from the Port of Oakland are food products grown in California.

Monitoring the water quality in the California Bay-Delta is a critical element of the USGS portfolio that has national and international importance. The California Bay-Delta is the largest estuary on the U.S. West Coast. It serves as a bellwether for coastal management in West Coast states from California to Alaska. The USGS has been monitoring the Bay-Delta for 40



years, which makes it one of a handful of places in the world with a long enough record to be useful for understanding how coastal ecosystems are changing in the face of many stressors.

An innovative local-state-federal partnership allows USGS to leverage equal funding from local sources as its investment. Local municipalities already contribute \$4.4M for collaborative monitoring. The USGS is able to leverage these funds to get the best value from its current investment. However, the loss of federal funding would jeopardize the entire program because local partners would be faced with shouldering a more than doubling of cost.

The data collected by USGS in the California Bay-Delta inform high-profile management decisions. Local, state, and federal agencies are facing billion dollar decisions about water supply developments, wastewater infrastructure, and navigational channel dredging. The USGS data are critical for making these decisions. Without these data, monies could be spent unnecessarily and not meet the needs of the future.

Data and discoveries from long-term USGS research have both motivated and measured outcomes of numerous policies at the regional and national scale. They provided a rationale for establishing California's Marine Invasive Species Act. They documented remarkable improvements in water quality after implementation of the Federal Clean Water Act. They are being used to guide and measure outcomes of habitat restoration actions, including the largest program of wetland restoration in the western U.S. Finally, they are now being used to establish water quality standards to protect San Francisco Bay from the harmful consequences of nutrient pollution including toxic algal blooms, which can have big impacts on public health and the economy. In 2016, a toxic algal bloom resulted in the closure of commercial fisheries along the entire West Coast.

Given the critical importance to the nation of the entire portfolio of USGS programs, even greater investment in one of the nation's most respected agencies would enhance the ability of the USGS to continue their scientific data collection and analyses versus a significant retraction of funding reflected in the President's FY18 budget. Cuts of the magnitude currently proposed would severely threaten the ability of water managers throughout the West, and particularly in the California Bay-Delta, to develop science-based actions for the sustainable management of water resources and the economies reliant on clean water. Continuing FY18 funding comparable to the FY17 enacted levels for programs in the California Bay-Delta and maintaining the overall budget of the USGS at \$1,085M will allow needed scientific data collection to not be interrupted or curtailed in the Bay Area and across the country.

Sincerely,

*David R. Williams*

David R. Williams  
Executive Director

