



Legislation and Communications Committee

Report on Activities from Washington, D.C.

Item 6b
September 9, 2024

Report on Activities from Washington, D.C.

Subject

Report on Activities from Washington, D.C.

Purpose

To provide a legislative update

Schedule



Congress in Recess until September 9

Appropriations Update



Senate markup of FY 25 Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies Appropriation Bill



House Passage of FY 25 Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Appropriations Bill



Water Recycling



Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2024

The Honorable Camille Calimlim Touton
Commissioner
Bureau of Reclamation
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Commissioner Touton:

We write to urge the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to increase the Title XVI Grant Program's per-project funding cap from \$30 million to \$40 million in order to account for inflation. As the West continues to recover from the impacts of long-term drought while also preparing for inevitable future droughts, it is imperative that the federal government continues to invest in local water supplies to meet the demands of recycled water in the West. Increasing the per-project funding cap by adjusting for inflation would ensure that the BOR is bringing every tool and resource to bear to stretch limited water supplies and bolster drought resilience.

As you know, BOR's Title XVI grant program has successfully allowed water providers in the West to leverage federal funding to finance necessary water recycling and water reuse infrastructure. For over thirty years, water reuse has been an incredibly valuable tool in the West to boost local water supplies and become more drought-resilient. Unfortunately, over the last few years, water infrastructure projects across the nation have been experiencing significant cost increases. A 2023 WateReuse Association survey of its members with Reclamation-approved Title XVI feasibility studies showed that the cost of their water recycling and reuse projects increased – on average – by around 80 percent since the time of feasibility study completion.

The *Reclamation Recycling and Water Conservation Act of 1996* established a \$20 million per project cap for the Title XVI program, but the law also provided Reclamation with the authority to increase the program's per project cap to keep pace with inflation. We applaud you for being the first Commissioner to use this authority when you raised the program's per project cap from \$20 million to \$30 million in 2022. However, given the significant increase in inflation and project costs in recent years, we urge you to again use your authority and raise the program's per project cap to \$40 million. According to the Consumer Price Index, \$20 million in 1996 dollars equates to approximately \$40 million in today's dollars.

As Western water agencies undertake efforts to adapt to climate change, the federal government must do all it can to encourage these water purveyors to bolster the resiliency of their systems and reduce dependency on imported water supplies. Water recycling is a critical component of achieving these objectives. By using your authority to increase the WIIN Title XVI grant program's per-project funding cap to \$40 million, the Bureau of Reclamation can offer water providers in the West the opportunity to more affordably invest in the necessary infrastructure to prepare for the next inevitable drought.

Senate Energy and Water Report Language:

WIIN Title XVI Cost Share.—The Committee directs Reclamation to index the project Federal cost share cap for eligible projects as authorized in section 4009(c) of the WIIN Act to inflation.

Legislative Update.



WRDA



NDAA



Senate Committee Mark-Up

