

Water Resources Research Act Program

Established by the Water Resources Research Act, nationwide Water Resource Research Institutes consult with state and local agencies, institutions of higher education, industry, and the general public to determine their research agenda in support of long-term water planning, policy development, and resource management.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) provides a modest base grant to target local priorities, recruit and train researchers, and leverage federal funds with state money and private funding. Institutes are able to leverage \$16 in non-USGS grant funds for every dollar they receive from the USGS, making the Water Resource Institutes a cost-effective cost-share program. Their federal to non-federal funding ratio outpaces other federal science programs, including the National Science Foundation.

The Idaho Water Resources Research Institute (IWRRI) serves as the coordinating entity for all of the University of Idaho's Water Research programs.



Arrowrock Dam on the Boise River with the overflow spillway in use. Located east of Boise.

Accomplishments

Over the past decade, the USGS's 104B program has provided seed funding to 40 research faculty at Idaho universities, enabling faculty to initiate and sustain research and education careers in Idaho. Seed funding has helped faculty direct more than \$4 million annually in water resources research activity from non-USGS sources. Specific accomplishments include:

- Supporting 40-plus water resources students who have gone on to become employees of the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, universities, and a number of private water-resources consulting firms.
- Developing a more thorough understanding of the economic-value managing the Boise River provides the Treasure Valley and how this may be affected by changes in the water management infrastructure as well as changes to the region's population, economy, and climate.
- Developing approaches for assessing crop-water usage over large areas using remote-sensing information. This collaborative effort between IWRRI and the Idaho Department of Water Resources was awarded the Harvard Kennedy School—Ash Institute Innovations in Government Award. It is now used routinely within the Department of Water Resources for investigating and resolving water rights conflicts, for aquifer depletion modeling, and for mitigation of endangered species through stream flow management. The model developed in this program is being adopted by ten western states and parts of Africa, Europe, and Australia. The model allows water managers to evaluate the effectiveness of water efficiency and aids the selection and implementation of water conservation practices.

Consequences of Reduced Funding

Reduced support would diminish Idaho's capacity to address its critical water resource issues, due to a reduction in knowledge created and disseminated through research and outreach activities, as well as a reduction in the number of students whose education is supported by this research activity.

Request: FY 2015 funding at least at the FY 2014 level of \$6.5 million, with a return to the high level of \$8.8 million if possible.

Account: Interior Appropriations; US Geological Survey; Surveys, Investigations and Research, Water Resources Research Institutes

For more information, please contact:

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