



Updated October 18, 2019

Bureau of Reclamation: FY2020 Appropriations

Overview

Most of the large dams and water diversion structures in the 17 states west of the Mississippi River were built by, or with the assistance of, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), part of the Department of the Interior. Reclamation’s original mission was to develop water supplies, primarily for irrigation to reclaim arid lands in the West. Today, its mission includes management, development, and protection of water and related resources. Reclamation’s mission areas and geographic scope are generally narrower than those of the other principal federal water resource agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Reclamation manages hundreds of water storage and conveyance projects. These projects provide water to approximately 10 million acres of farmland and 31 million people. Reclamation is the largest wholesale supplier of water in these 17 western states and the second-largest hydroelectric power producer in the nation. Operations of Reclamation facilities can be controversial, particularly in relation to effects on fish and wildlife species and conflicts among competing water users.

Reclamation’s role has evolved, and its focus has gradually shifted from construction of new water storage projects to operation and maintenance of existing projects. Reclamation has also expanded into new areas, including funding for water supply projects on tribal lands and in rural areas under congressionally authorized Indian water rights settlements and rural water supply projects, respectively. Congress has also authorized Reclamation grants to nonfederal projects, including those for water reuse and recycling, conservation and efficiency, and desalination.

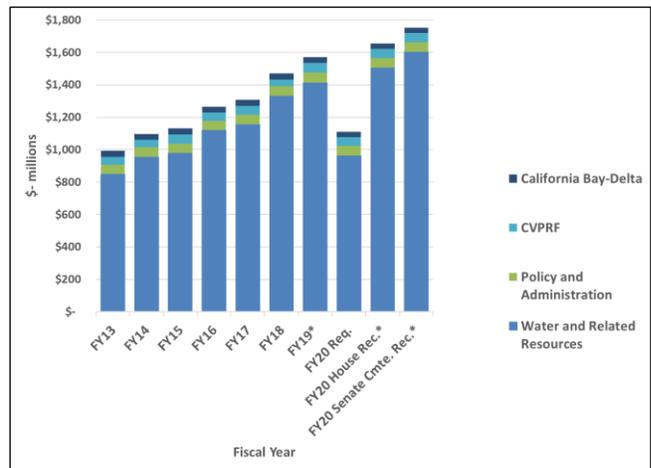
Reclamation’s Water and Related Resources account funds most agency activities, including construction, operation and maintenance, dam safety, and ecosystem restoration. It also funds Indian water rights settlements and most Reclamation programmatic and grant authorities. Reclamation also typically requests funding for three smaller accounts: California Bay-Delta Restoration, the Central Valley Project Restoration Fund (the latter of which is offset by customer receipts), and the Policy and Administration account.

FY2020 Budget

The President’s budget request for FY2020 proposed \$1.11 billion in gross current authority for Reclamation. The House recommended \$1.63 billion for Reclamation, and the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$1.73 billion. **Figure 1** shows recent appropriations levels for Reclamation compared to the FY2020 President’s budget request and the most recent House and Senate Appropriations Committee recommendations.

Figure 1. Reclamation Appropriations by Account, FY2013-FY2020 Senate Appropriations Committee Recommendation

(nominal \$ in millions)



Source: CRS, based on Reclamation budget request and enacted appropriations data.

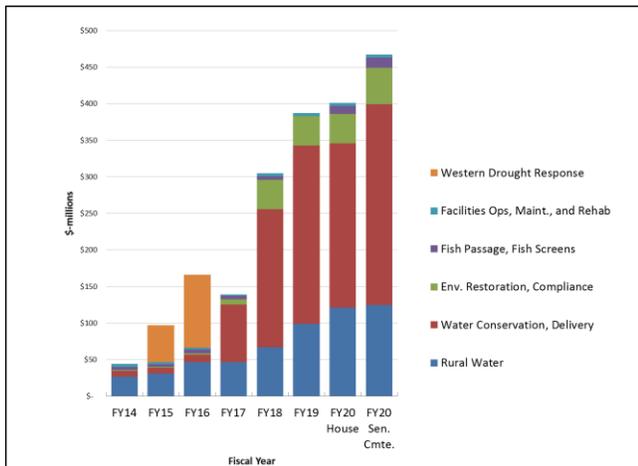
Notes: Does not reflect offsetting receipts for the Central Valley Project Restoration Fund (CVPRF). * Reflects transfer of \$21.4 million in Western Area Power Administration revenues for Reclamation expenditure on Upper Colorado River Basin Fund activities.

Earmarks and Reclamation

The Water and Related Resources account is made up largely of individual project funding lines. These projects have been subject to recent earmark moratoriums that restrict the addition of funding for geographically specific project line-items that the Administration did not request. In lieu of these additions, since FY2014 Congress has included additional funding in appropriations bills beyond the President’s budget request for selected categories of Reclamation projects. These funds are typically allocated in work plans produced by the Administration and made available several months after appropriations bills have been enacted (these plans are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/budget/>).

Recent enacted appropriations bills continued the practice of providing additional funds to be allocated in a work plan. FY2019 enacted appropriations for Reclamation provided \$387 million for projects in five categories. For FY2020, the House recommendation and the Senate Appropriations Committee recommendation proposed \$401 million and \$467 million, respectively, in additional funds. These funds would be provided to projects across five categories: rural water; water conservation and delivery; environmental restoration or compliance; and facilities operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Reclamation Additional Funding, FY2014-FY2020 Senate Committee Recommendation
(nominal \$ in millions)



Source: CRS, based on Reclamation appropriations data.

Reclamation Appropriations Issues

WIIN Act Section 4007 Funding

Section 4007 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN Act; P.L. 114-322) authorized Reclamation to study and construct new or expanded federal and nonfederal water storage projects. In order for projects to receive funding, they must be found feasible by Reclamation, have a cost-sharing partner, and be named in enacted appropriations legislation by Congress, among other things. In 2018 reporting, Reclamation initially recommended seven projects to receive \$35 million in FY2017 funding; Congress agreed to these recommendations in enacted FY2018 appropriations. In February 2019, Reclamation recommended another round of projects to receive \$75 million in FY2017 and FY2018 funds: Shasta Dam and Reservoir Enlargement (\$57.0 million); Cle Elum Pool Raise (\$4.0 million); Boise River Basin Feasibility Study (\$1.75 million); Del Puerto Water District Feasibility Study (\$1.50 million); Los Vaqueros Phase 2 Feasibility Study (\$2.15 million); Sites Reservoir Feasibility Study (\$6.0 million); and Friant-Kern Subsidence Correction Feasibility Study (\$2.35 million). As with the 2018 list, these projects must be named in enacted appropriations legislation. The House and Senate Appropriations recommended bills for FY2020 agreed with all of the Administration’s recommendations, with the exception of funding for the Shasta Dam Raise Project.

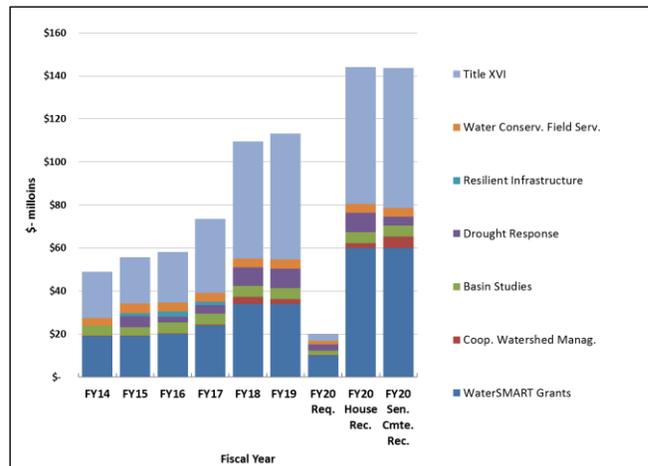
Congress also appropriated an additional \$134 million for Section 4007 projects in FY2019. This funding has yet to be recommended in the required project level allocations by the Administration. For FY2020, the House recommendation contained an additional \$67 million for these projects, and the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended bill included \$134 million. For more information, see CRS In Focus IF10626, *Reclamation Water Storage Projects: Section 4007 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act*.

WaterSMART Program

Reclamation combines funding for multiple programs promoting water conservation into a single program—WaterSMART. WaterSMART is notable for its departure from Reclamation’s traditional federal project-based funding. In recent years, WaterSMART has included funding for seven programs. The largest sub-programs in the initiative are WaterSMART grants (i.e., water and related energy efficiency projects) and Title XVI projects (i.e., water recycling and reuse projects).

For FY2020, the Administration requested a total of \$20 million for the WaterSMART program, or \$93 million below the FY2019 enacted level of \$113 million. The FY2020 House and Senate Appropriations Committee recommendations for these projects were both approximately \$144 million (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Reclamation WaterSMART Program, FY2013-FY2020 Senate Committee Recommendation
(nominal \$ in millions)



Source: CRS, based on Reclamation budget request and appropriations data.

Rural Water Supply and Indian Water Rights Settlements (IWRS)

Reclamation is authorized to build projects that provide water supplies to rural communities and Indian tribes. The FY2020 President’s budget requested \$28 million for five authorized rural water projects, or \$105 million less than the FY2019 enacted level. The House recommended \$149 million for these projects, while the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$153 million. Much of these funding amounts would be provided to Reclamation as “additional funding” amounts (see previous section, “Earmarks and Reclamation”). For IWRS, the FY2020 President’s budget requested \$100 million in construction funds to implement four authorized Indian water rights settlements, or \$8 million less than the FY2019 enacted amount. The House and Senate Appropriations Committee both agreed with this funding in their FY2020 recommendations. For more information, see CRS Report R44148, *Indian Water Rights Settlements*.

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