



April 2, 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.

Today, 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.

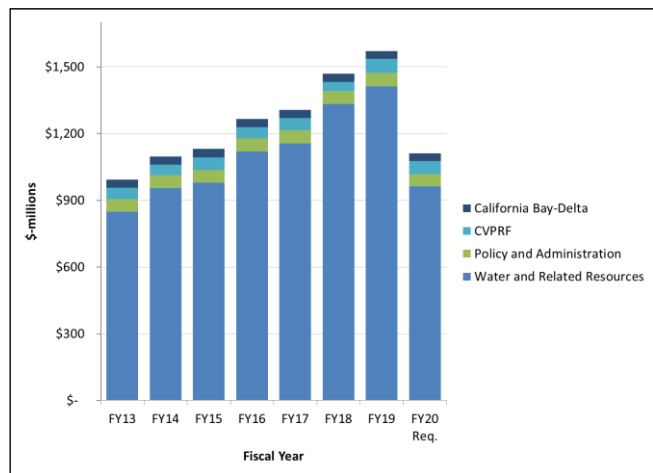
Reclamation’s role has evolved, and its focus has gradually shifted from construction of new water storage projects to operation and maintenance of existing projects. Reclamation also has expanded into new areas, including funding for water supply projects on tribal lands and in rural areas under congressionally 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 final FY2019 enacted level was \$1.57 billion. **Figure 1** shows recent appropriations levels for Reclamation compared to the FY2020 President’s budget request.

Figure 1. Bureau of Reclamation Accounts and Appropriations, FY2013-FY2020 Request
(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).

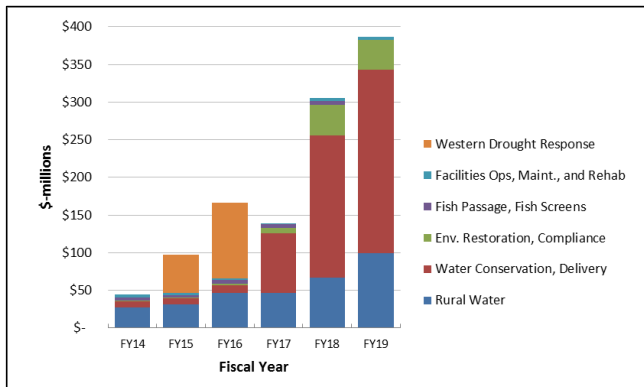
Earmarks and Reclamation

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 beyond the President’s budget request for selected categories of Reclamation projects. These funds typically are 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/>).

FY2019 enacted appropriations continued the practice of providing additional funds to be allocated in a work plan. Congress appropriated \$387 million in addition to the President’s FY2019 budget request to fund projects in the following categories: rural water (\$99 million); water conservation and delivery (\$244 million); environmental restoration or compliance (\$40 million); and facilities operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation (\$4 million). Additional funding amounts for Reclamation in recent enacted Energy and Water appropriations bills are shown in **Figure 2**. The lack of funding for these projects in the President’s Budget Request for FY2020 accounts for 83% of the reduction compared to the FY2019 enacted amount.

Figure 2. Reclamation Additional Funding Items, FY2014-FY2019

(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 the appropriation of \$335 million for 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 to Congress, Reclamation initially recommended seven projects to receive \$35 million in FY2017 funding for WIIN Act Section 4007 projects; Congress agreed to these recommendations in the enacted FY2018 Energy and Water appropriations bill. In February 2019, Reclamation recommended another round of projects to receive \$75.0 million in FY2017 and FY2018 funds: Shasta Dam and Reservoir Enlargement in California (\$57.0 million); Cle Elum Pool Raise in Washington (\$4.0 million); Boise River Basin Feasibility Study in Idaho (\$1.75 million); Del Puerto Water District Feasibility Study in California (\$1.50 million); Los Vaqueros Phase 2 Feasibility Study in California (\$2.15 million); Sites Reservoir Feasibility Study in California (\$6.0 million); and Friant-Kern Subsidence Correction Feasibility Study in California (\$2.35 million). As with the 2018 list, these projects must be named in enacted appropriations legislation to move forward.

Congress appropriated an additional \$134 million for Section 4007 projects in FY2019. Thus, as of early 2019, the full authorized amount of \$335 million had been appropriated for Section 4007 projects, but less than half of those funds had been allocated or recommended for allocation by the Administration. 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

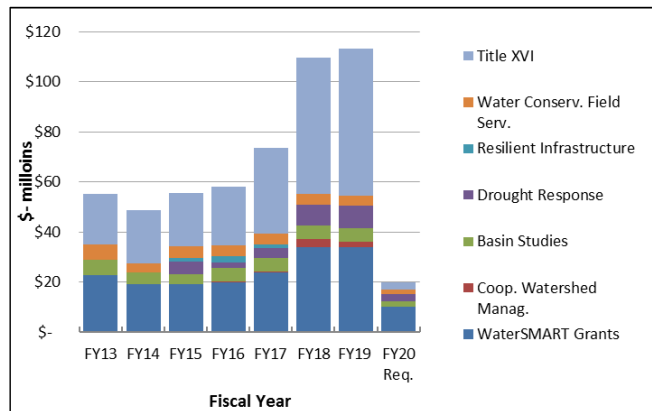
Reclamation combines funding for multiple agency-wide programs promoting water conservation into a single program—the WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage American Resources for Tomorrow) program. The program is part of the Department of the Interior’s focus on water

conservation, reuse, and planning, and it is notable for its departure from Reclamation’s traditional project-based funding. In recent years, WaterSMART has included funding for seven programs. Of these seven programs, the largest are WaterSMART grants (which fund water and related energy efficiency projects) and Title XVI projects (which fund 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. Funding levels for WaterSMART are shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Reclamation WaterSMART Program, FY2013-FY2020 Request

(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 construct and operate projects that provide water supplies to rural communities and Indian tribes. In 2019, the bureau estimated that approximately \$1.3 billion was needed to complete its authorized rural water projects, and an additional \$1.3 billion was needed for IWRS projects. The FY2020 President’s budget requested \$28 million for five authorized rural water projects, or \$105 million less than the FY2019 enacted level. 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 FY2019 enacted. For more information, see CRS Report R44148, *Indian Water Rights Settlements*.

Aging Infrastructure

In 2019, Reclamation estimated that it would have \$2.4 billion in “extraordinary” (i.e., non-routine) maintenance needs over the next five years; this is an increase of \$300 million from its 2018 estimates. To address these needs, the FY2020 budget request proposed to more than double its spending on extraordinary operations and maintenance (\$114 million, or a \$58 million increase from FY2019). It also proposed \$92 million for Reclamation’s dam safety activities, which is similar to the FY2019 enacted amount.

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