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The Honorable Joe Biden President-Elect  
United States of America  
1120 20<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Attn: Dr. Cecilia Martinez, CEQ Review Team  
Kevin Washburn, Dept. of Interior Review Team  
Cristin Dorgelo, Office of Science and Technology Policy Review Team  
Geovette Washington, Dept. of Commerce Review Team  
Kath Hicks, Dept. of Defense Review Team

Dear President-Elect Biden:

The Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) congratulates you on winning the 2020 election. You will take office during a critical moment in U.S. history, and we are confident your commitment to research and science will serve you well. Formed in 1959, the ICWP membership consists of state, interstate and local water management agencies as well as affiliates representing the water science equipment providers and other water consulting firms. We work to inform federal agencies about how their programs may be developed or modified to best meet the needs of our ICWP members and, simultaneously, promote wise, consistent and efficient water resource management throughout the nation. To help you and your team hit the ground running, the following highlights reflect the top issues facing ICWP members and provides you with our greatest concerns requiring attention to address our country's water management challenges.

### **Water Infrastructure**

We were pleased to hear during your campaign your desire to reinvest in America's infrastructure. Sound, well-maintained, and adequately funded water infrastructure is vital to public health, environmental protection, irrigation agriculture, firefighting, recreation and economic growth. Investment in the nation's water infrastructure will be key to our economic recovery. The authorities for the US Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) new starts and continuing authorizations in the Water Resources Development Act are critical for maintaining America's water infrastructure. Equally critical in the West are the investments made by the Bureau of Reclamation along with water users. Nationwide, aging infrastructure is a growing concern and innovative funding mechanisms are needed to avert failures and related economic casualty from a non-secure water supply.

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Partnerships are critical to getting USACE authorized projects on the ground. Unfortunately, some of our members are hitting roadblocks with language in the Project Partnership Agreements related to indemnification and perpetual operations and maintenance (O&M) obligations. We look forward to working with your officials at USACE to find a path forward such that these critical water projects can become a reality.

## **USGS and NOAA Water Science**

The federal government has an obligation to provide a basic monitoring framework of our nation's water resources. ICWP supports additional resources for the Water Mission Area of the U.S. Geological Survey to maintain and expand their streamgaging networks to provide this backbone of gages to understand water availability and use across the nation. Our members particularly urge adequate funding for the Federal Priority Streamgage network and for Cooperative Matching funds for the federal share on streamgaging in locations of critical importance to regional water managers. Several years of flatlined budget for the Federal Priorities Streamgage network is now resulting in the loss of critical, long term gages which are necessary for modeling and forecasting modernization, as well as for making many other day-to-day hydrologic decisions. Many of these threatened gages are necessary for interstate river basin compact allocation verification or are located at the boundary of tribal reservations. ICWP supports initiatives such as the USGS's Next Generation Water Observation System (NGWOS), but we do not support shifting resources away from the fundamental streamgaging programs for these new initiatives.

We also urge you to expand the support for better understanding and forecasting water resources at all time frames. Weather and climate forecasting by the NOAA-NWS is improving, but support is critical for the seasonal to sub-seasonal forecasting and modeling work being done at those agencies. ICWP also supports the funding mechanism for a national extreme precipitation atlas as provided for in Section 12 of the pending S. 4462 FLOODS Act which would replace the dated, piecemeal method of completing these important weather prediction tools. Increased severity, duration and volume of precipitation events is predicted by almost all climate models and we must be prepared. We request that your Presidential budget for NOAA include funding for the Atlas 14 program with direct federal funds rather than the current grants-based funding method.

## **Water Planning**

Every state in the U.S. engages in some sort of water planning. Some include climate plans and some are coordinated with their respective state disaster response agency. ICWP supports federal programs working in concert with the plans laid out by state planning agencies and the federal agencies should assist and defer to every state's needs and priorities, aiding in the fruition of the state plans, not working counter. The Planning Assistance to States Program in the USACE is a strong example of a supportive federal program working in concert with state's needs. We urge your team to continue supporting this important program.

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## **Interstate River Basin Commissions/Organizations**

ICWP provides a forum for improved coordination among the various river basin interstate commissions and organizations in the nation. ICWP recently completed an update to its Interstate Water Management Report and Primer on interstate water management. Managing water based on river basin boundaries has obvious benefits and we ask that the federal agencies utilize these river basin commissions and organizations to their greatest benefit. The [2020 Report update can be found HERE](#) and it contains several recommendations for interstate river basin water management.

## **Coordination Among Federal Agencies with Water Management Responsibilities**

Encouraging the myriad of federal agencies with some type of water resources responsibility to better coordinate is beneficial to end users and to state/interstate planners across the nation. ICWP supports your administration making it a high priority for agencies to work in concert in the delivery of federal water programs.

The concept of a Water Sub-cabinet is non-partisan, is supported by national water organizations and could be addressed via Executive Order by your administration. Such an Executive Order could work in concert with Section 13 of the FLOODS Act (S. 4462) should it pass during the lame duck session of Congress.

## **Conclusion**

ICWP respectfully requests your administration provide assistance with:

- Removing roadblocks with the USACE on cooperative infrastructure projects;
- Improving collaboration between the states and the federal government on water supply planning;
- Funding of critical water data information collection and management which supports infrastructure design and management as well as the protection of public safety;
- Supporting water resources management based on river basin boundaries such as the work accomplished through interstate agencies, commissions and agreements; and
- Establishing and formalizing a collaborative Water Sub-cabinet to facilitate coordination among federal agencies with water resource initiatives.

ICWP looks forward to working with your administration to find workable strategies to meet these important water resources challenges. Our Executive Director, Sue Lowry, would be happy to provide more detail on any of these topics. She can be reached at 307-630-5804 or [sue@icwp.org](mailto:sue@icwp.org)

Sincerely,



Kirsten Wallace, Chair  
Interstate Council on Water Policy