

Water in the 21st Century Act

Full Summary

Title I: Efficiency and Conservation

- **Section 101: Water efficiency, conservation, and adaptation**
 - **Sec. 101.a: WaterSense Program Authorization.**
 - Authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program activities and provides funding for the program (increasing from \$5M in FY15; \$10M in FY16; \$15M in FY17; and \$20M in FY18).
 - Requires water efficient product criteria to be regularly updated.
 - **Sec. 101.b: State Water Efficiency and Conservation Incentives Program.**
 - Authorizes funding for state, local, county, and tribal governments, and water utilities, energy utilities and nonprofit organizations to implement financial incentives programs to purchase and install residential, commercial, and institutional water efficient products and services, including WaterSense certified new homes.
 - Water efficient products and services include those for residential, commercial, and institutional buildings or landscaping that are rated for water efficiency and performance by the WaterSense program or a state incentives program.
 - Funds may be used to pay up to 50 percent of the incentives provided by an incentive program.
 - Authorization: \$100M in FY15, escalating to \$200M in FY17, and back down to \$100M in FY19.
 - **Sec. 101.c: Water System Mitigation and Adaptation Grants**
 - Creates a new grant program within the Environmental Protection Agency for water systems (defined by the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act) to:
 - Conserve water, increase water efficiency, or reuse water;
 - Modify or relocate existing water system infrastructure made or projected to be made inoperable by climate change impacts;
 - Preserve or improve water quality;
 - Invest in groundwater remediation, recycled water, or desalination systems;
 - Increase watershed preservation and protection to improve source water;
 - Increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in water treatment and delivery;
 - Support the use of advanced water treatment, supply management, and water demand management that increases water supply or reduces water or energy use;
 - Promote more efficient use of water supplies on agricultural lands;
 - Conduct studies to project how climate change may impact water systems;
 - Rapidly address impacts on water systems in regions most susceptible to abrupt climate change, including the Colorado River Basin and coastal regions.

- All grant applications must be supported by the best available research or data (as determined by the EPA).
- Grants are for a maximum of 50% of the project cost, and are competitively awarded.
- Authorization: Such sums as are necessary to carry out the act.

Title II: Water Recycling, Storage, and Integrated Water Management

- **Subtitle A: Innovative Financing**

- Modeled after the successful and popular Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program, this title would offer long-term, low-cost financing for eligible water infrastructure projects directly and indirectly associated with a Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) project.
- Uses of such loan funds to include projects that reclaim and reuse/recycle:
 - Municipal, industrial, domestic, and agricultural wastewater.
 - And naturally impaired ground and surface waters
- Funds, under the Act (\$100 million a year), would be available to finance the planning, design and construction as well as the acquisition of real property or an interest in real property if the acquisition is integral to an otherwise eligible project.

- **Subtitle B: Integrated Regional Water Management, Reclamation, and Recycling Projects**

- Would allow Reclamation to participate as a technical and financial partner with state and local water management entities to develop
 - Storage and conveyance associated with regional integrated water management.
 - And reuse/recycling projects, one of the few new dependable sources of water in drought-parched Western watersheds.
- Such integrated water management and reuse projects can provide:
 - More efficient and beneficial use or reuse of water;
 - Increase the availability of usable water supplies for multiple uses;
 - Provide resiliency of water sources from the impacts of climate change;
 - Provide new partnerships across the spectrum of water beneficiaries; and
 - Generate agricultural, urban and industrial water supplies along with providing added environmental benefits.
- Provides authority for Reclamation to participate in these projects with cost-shared grants of up to \$15 million, and funds would be available to be expended for up to five years—program would be authorized at \$700 million.

- **Subtitle C: Transfer Title to Certain Reclamation Facilities or Separable Elements of Such Facilities**

- Would authorize the Secretary of the Interior, under specific conditions, to transfer ownership of a Reclamation project to a non-federal entity. This will allow for the non-

federal operating entity to obtain a loan guarantee that would not constitute a “third-party” financed obligation and would be favorably “scored” under congressional budget rules.

Title III: Innovation through Research, Data, and Technology

- **Section 301: Open Water Data System**

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior, through the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), to establish an open water data system that improves water data availability, enhances data use, and ensures timely distribution of water data and information. This data system would support water management, research, education, assessment, and monitoring.
- Requires the Secretary to integrate water data into a national data framework; identify water data and information needs; support water data sharing, research, and educational programs; and encourage cooperation among State, local, and tribal governments, communities, education institutions, and the private sector related to water data and information.

- **Sec. 302: Water Resources Research Act Amendments and Reauthorization**

- Amends the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 to reauthorize grants and requires applied water supply research at the water resources research and technology institutes established under that Act at each state.
- Authorizes \$9 million for each of fiscal years 2015 through 2020.

- **Sec. 303: Water Desalinization Act Reauthorization**

- Authorizes \$6 million a year through 2020 for the Secretary of the Interior to conduct studies regarding the desalinization of water and water reuse, and for other purposes

- **Sec. 304: Review of Reservoir Operations**

- Would give the Secretary of the Army authority to review the operation of a reservoir, at the request of its non-Federal sponsor, and determine if a change in operation using improved weather forecasts and run-off forecasting through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would—
 - Reduce risks to human life, public safety and property.
 - Reduce the need for future disaster relief.
 - Improve local water storage capability and reliability.
 - Restore, protect or mitigate impacts of the project on the environment.
 - Or improve fish species habitat.

Title IV: Drought Preparedness and Resilience

- **Sec. 401: National Drought Resilience Guidelines**

- EPA would lead an inter-agency effort, including Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Agriculture and other federal agencies, to develop National Drought Resilience

Guidelines for states, local government and water agencies. This product would provide a framework of non-regulatory recommendations to strengthen drought preparedness planning and investments.

- **Sec. 402: Drought Preparedness for Fisheries**

- Directs U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in consultation with state and federal agencies, to prepare a California salmon drought plan to address the impacts of the drought on the salmon population.
- Provides an additional \$3 million in funding for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to carry out its work to respond to extreme drought conditions, including relocation of the release location and timing of hatchery fish and barging of hatchery release fish.