

March 9, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment & Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: National Groundwater Monitoring Network FY2017 Funding

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we ask for your continued support of the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN) in the FY2017 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill. Groundwater is a critical source of drinking water for more than 40% of the country, and in some locations is relied on by more than 80% of the population. It is a primary source of irrigation water for high-quality agricultural products and an important economic driver for the U.S. economy. **Therefore, we the undersigned ask Congress to fund the NGWMN at a level of \$5 million for FY2017.**

Drought conditions persist throughout the West, and groundwater depletion has expressed itself through subsidence, lowering of aquifer water-levels below well intakes, and impacts on water quality. Drought conditions underscore the need to develop a comprehensive and publicly accessible groundwater monitoring network.

**The NGWMN was authorized in the 2009 SECURE Water Act** and is at the beginning stages of implementation, providing federal support for pilot programs in six states--Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, and Texas and initial appropriations of \$2.6 million and \$3.6 million provided in FY2015 and FY2016. This support allowed for cooperative agreements to be signed between the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and several states. However, support must continue and be expanded to enable broader implementation at a time when stresses to water supplies across the country are felt daily.

The NGWMN is designed to expand and enhance many existing monitoring efforts, but these efforts are not presented in a common platform and often require extensive analysis in order to use the data collected on a national scale, limiting the data's usability. **The NGWMN, through a federal-state cooperative program, provides for the collection of groundwater data from representative wells meeting common criteria, assuring the usability and quality of the data contributed to the network.** The United States Geological Survey (USGS) maintains and updates the network, providing public access through a [web portal](#), allowing anyone with a web browser to see groundwater level and water quality

trends for wells in the network. **States and other contributors to the NGWMN retain ownership of the collected data.**

Ultimately, the network will provide the data required to assess baseline conditions and long-term trends in groundwater levels and water quality in important aquifers at national, multistate, and regional scales—even aquifers shared with Canada and Mexico. The network will also provide data for national, state, and-aquifer-level management decisions to help determine the long-term viability of these groundwater sources.

Groundwater’s role in securing our nation’s future is invaluable, which is why we request that Congress fund the NGWMN at \$5 million for FY2017.

To ensure that the funding fulfills the intent of the NGWMN as authorized by the SECURE Water Act, we also request the following report language be included:

*Within Water Resources, the bill includes \$5 million for continuation of a National Groundwater Monitoring Network, as requested. The Committee intends at least fifty percent of these funds to be used to provide cost-share grants to state and local entities to upgrade monitoring networks to national standards and to incorporate wells into the network. The funding will also support additional work by the USGS necessary to manage and provide data access through an internet web portal.*

Please contact Lauren Schapker of the National Ground Water Association at [lschapker@ngwa.org](mailto:lschapker@ngwa.org) or 202.888.9151 if you have questions or would like additional information regarding the NGWMN. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

American Geosciences Institute  
Arizona Water Well Association  
Association of American State Geologists  
California Groundwater Association  
Colorado Water Well Contractors Association  
Empire State Water Well Drillers Association  
Georgia Association of Groundwater Professionals  
Groundwater Resources Association of California  
Ground Water Protection Council  
Illinois Association of Groundwater Professionals  
Irrigation Association  
Louisiana Ground Water Association  
Michigan Ground Water Association  
Minnesota Water Well Association

Montana Water Well Drillers Association  
National Ground Water Association  
National Utility Contractors Association  
Nebraska Well Drillers Association  
Nevada Groundwater Association  
North Carolina Ground Water Association  
South Carolina Ground Water Association  
Tennessee Water Well Association  
Oregon Ground Water Association  
Washington State Ground Water Association  
Water Systems Council  
Water Quality Association  
Wyoming Water Well Association