

# Watershed Program Infrastructure

## A Critical Investment for the Future



An area of common interest to both Congress and the Administration is our Nation's infrastructure. The Watershed Program projects represent an important national and conservation infrastructure.

This critical infrastructure:

- Protects lives and property
- Reduces the need for federal disaster assistance
- Builds community resiliency to extreme weather events
- Provides reliable/high quality drinking water
- Creates and preserves jobs
- Broadens the economic base
- Improves water quality

The National Watershed Coalition and local watershed project sponsors across the country realize the continuing investment in conservation infrastructure through the Watershed Program is a part of the solution to a prosperous national economic future and a quality environment for rural America

We are pleased that the Administration's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget contains a request for \$200 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations. This represents an important step in the right direction.

The National Watershed Coalition supports current documented needs for federally authorized projects. The figures below represent a responsible funding level:

- \$300 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- \$35 million for Watershed Surveys and Planning
- \$85 million for Watershed Rehabilitation

These budget recommendations are based on previous published data by the federal government, requests from watershed project sponsors and our assessment of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's capacity to deliver the Program.



## Why Should Federal Funds be Appropriated for the Watershed Program?

- \* The collective Watershed Program benefits to rural and urban communities across the country add up to a stronger national economy and a more productive and secure Nation. The Watershed Program represents opportunity for the perfect blend of natural resource protection and the creation of economic opportunity for rural America. Investment in the Watershed Program represents expanding opportunities for natural resource conservation coupled with important national economic and environmental dividends for all Americans.
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- \* Reliable water supply and flood protection created by the Watershed Program are essential to creating and maintaining strong rural communities. Well managed water resources create economic growth and strengthen local economies. Positive community development requires economic opportunity and the ability to create and sustain jobs. Flood protection is essential to prevent the unnecessary loss of infrastructure and capital to developing economies in rural America.
  - \* The Watershed Program has existing authorities to deal with a wide range of natural resource issues, including flood control, water quality, sediment and erosion control, water supplies and water based recreation. Watershed projects also build resilience and reduce the risk and costs associated with the impacts of changing climate conditions. It is a proven, cost-effective program with thousands of success stories. Watershed projects protect lives, property and reduce flood damages. They play an important role in protecting resources vital to the agricultural economy as well. The Program is federally-assisted, but locally planned and implemented. Local project sponsors use local resources to maintain constructed project measures which contribute directly to a stronger national economy and a responsible national environmental future.
  - \* It is a well-known economic development principle that attracting commerce and retaining the workforce is tied to quality of life issues. There are countless successful examples that verify investing in the Watershed Program in rural areas brings the water supply, recreation and flood protection benefits of the Program to bear on sustainable economic development opportunities. Watershed Program projects make the participating communities more productive places to live, work and play.
  - \* New construction and rehabilitation of existing Watershed Program flood control measures create jobs and fuel the economy. Contractors hire employees and make purchases of fuel, concrete, equipment and other services.



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