

WaterSMART’s Quarterly Newsletter:

The Tributary

July 2026



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION



Aerial View of Salt River Project, Arizona (Credit: Salt River Project Surface Water Team)

Welcome to the WaterSMART quarterly newsletter, The Tributary. This publication provides Reclamation staff and partners with updates and highlights from programs under the WaterSMART umbrella. Through WaterSMART, Reclamation cooperatively with

states, Tribes, and local entities as they plan for and implement actions to address local water needs and increase water supply reliability through investments in water management and infrastructure. Since 2010, Reclamation has partnered with stakeholders across the Western United States to implement over 2,300 water conservation and supply reliability projects through WaterSMART programs.

On January 23, 2026, the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026 was signed into law. The Act provides approximately \$41million in funds across WaterSMART programs. For a more detailed view of what this law entails, please visit the official page on [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

WaterSMART Programs	FY 2026 Appropriations
Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Program	\$500,000
WaterSMART Grants	\$15,000,000
Water Conservation Field Services	\$2,452,000
Cooperative Watershed Management Program	\$6,000,000
Drought Response & Drought Contingency Planning	\$5,000,000
Title XVI Water Recycling and Reuse	\$12,500,000

Highlights from 2025

Colorado's Uncompahgre River Project



Uncompahgre River, Colorado (Credit: Hannah Holm, American Rivers)

The Uncompahgre Multi-Benefit Project, managed by American Rivers and funded under WaterSMART's Enhancing Water Resources Projects program, addresses river degradation and water users' needs along the Uncompahgre River in Colorado. The Project took an integrated approach to restoring a one-mile stretch of the river, which included replacing and stabilizing the Ward Ditch diversion, notching a historic berm to reconnect the river to its floodplain, and placing rock structures in the river that both protect against bank erosion and improve fish habitat. Meanwhile, ditch and field improvements make it easier to spread water across the land for agriculture

and re-establish native vegetation. In addition to the direct benefits this project delivers for on-site habitat and landowners, the enhanced ability of the river to spread out on its floodplain also provides downstream benefits. With construction wrapping up in November 2025, the transformation of this stretch of river and its adjacent floodplain is nearly complete. Fields of flowers and fresh willow plantings are replacing invasive species and dead cottonwoods, and new pools, sandbars, and riffles are providing instream habitat, complementing other organizations' work to remediate old mines upstream. As a bonus, when the water level is right, the reach has become an inviting run for skilled whitewater boaters.

Continuous Predictive Hydrologic Model to Inform Salt River Project's Reservoir Operations within the Salt and Verde Watersheds

The Salt River Project (SRP) Agricultural Improvement and Power District in Arizona is responsible for the development of conjunctive water resource management planning for reservoir and groundwater pumping operations, for the coordination of emergency reservoir operations, and for weather forecasting in support of SRP's water and power business needs. SRP obtained funding from Reclamation under the WaterSMART Applied Science Grant program to develop an Operations Support Tool comprised of integrated watershed forecasting and reservoir operations models. Emergency reservoir operations are vital to maintain the safety and integrity of the dams. Weather forecasting provides support for routine and emergency

operation of the SRP's reservoir and electric distribution systems, which increase system reliability, safety and augment energy resource planning. Upstream of the reservoirs, high streamflow generally occurs during the winter and early spring, resulting from rainfall and snowmelt on saturated ground or intense rain-on-snow events. Downstream of the uppermost reservoirs, local tributaries can contribute significant local inflow not only during the cold season but also during the summer with intense local rainfall from convective storms. Changing landscape conditions from wildfire and forest restoration alter runoff efficiency and therefore create additional challenges. To date, SRP has relied on separate forecasting products and modeling tools to manage and operate for these different objectives. The tool developed under this project will allow SRP to both analyze the impacts of forecasted hydrological events in the watershed on the safety of dams and better manage operations and storage in the reservoirs.

General WaterSMART Updates

The WaterSMART Program continues to award projects and update Notice of Funding Opportunities. Please use our website for the latest information, contacts, and updates at [WaterSMART | Bureau of Reclamation](#).

Funding Opportunities:

Several Fiscal Year 2026 WaterSMART funding opportunities are currently open:

- **Drought Response Program:** Applications are due July 28, 2026. An informational webinar was held April 21, 2026, and the recording is available on the WaterSMART website.
- **Enhancing Water Resources Projects:** First-round applications are due September 9, 2026. Second-round applications are due September 8, 2027. An informational webinar was held June 16, 2026, and will be available on the WaterSMART website.
- **Cooperative Watershed Management Program:** First-round applications are due October 7, 2026. Additional application deadlines are February 24, 2027, September 1, 2027, and February 15, 2028. An informational webinar will be held July 21, 2026.
- **Title XVI Water Reclamation and Reuse Projects:** First-round applications are due August 26, 2026. Second-round applications are due August 26, 2027.
- **Desalination Construction:** First-round applications are due August 26, 2026. Second-round applications are due August 26, 2027.

Upcoming NOFOs:

- **Planning and Project Design and Water and Energy Efficiency Grants:** The Fiscal Year 2026 NOFOs for these programs are anticipated to open before the end of 2026.

- **Water and Energy Efficiency Grants:** The Fiscal Year 2026 NOFO is expected to open before the end of 2026.

Selections and Applications Under Review:

- **Water and Energy Efficiency Grants:** Fiscal Year 2024 selections were announced June 3, 2026.
- **Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects:** The Fiscal Year 2026 NOFO closed June 2, 2026, and applications are currently under review.
- **Applied Science Grants:** The first application round closed July 8, 2026. The second-round application deadline is April 13, 2027.
- **Large-Scale Water Recycling Projects:** The Fiscal Year 2026 NOFO closed May 13, 2026, and applications are currently under review.

For announcements and updates, please visit www.usbr.gov/watersmart

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The Verde River in central Arizona (Credit: Friends of the Verde River)