



Government Affairs Update – November 2024

The report below details issues and activities for the third quarter of 2024. For more information, please contact Brad Sherwood, Assistant General Manager, at sherwood@scwa.ca.gov.

FEDERAL AFFAIRS

Issue: FY25 Appropriations

Status: As previously reported, on March 11th, President Biden submitted to Congress his budget request for fiscal year 2025 (FY25). The FY25 budget proposal will not be enacted as drafted and is certain to face steep opposition among Congressional Republicans whose own spending blueprint contains dramatically different priorities.

Lawmakers started to move FY25 appropriations bill during the quarter. The House Appropriations Committee approved all 12 of its FY25 measures prior to the August recess and six of those bills have been passed by the full chamber. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved 11 of its 12 bills during the same period, but the full Senate has not taken up any of the measures.

On July 9th, the House Appropriations Committee approved [H.R. 9026](#), the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2025 on a 31-26 vote. On July 25th, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed [S. 4795](#), its version of the measure by a vote of 26-3. Both versions await consideration in their respective chambers.

On July 26th, the House Appropriations Committee approved [H.R. 8997](#), the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2025 on a 30-26 vote. On August 1st, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed [S. 4795](#), its version of the measure by a vote of 28-0. Both versions await consideration in their respective chambers.

As none of the FY25 appropriations measures have been enacted, on September 26th, President Biden signed [H.R. 9747](#), FY2025 Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the federal government at FY24 levels through December 20th. Provisions and funding levels included in final FY25 appropriations will be impacted by the outcomes of the 2024 elections.

Issue: Sub-seasonal to Seasonal Precipitation Forecasting

Status: Sonoma Water continued to organize and lead efforts to promote federal support for precipitation forecasting to better manage reservoir operations. Sonoma Water assisted with expansion of a broad coalition of water users, water management agencies, and a diverse group of local, state, regional, and national organizations committed to advancing improved sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting in the west and throughout the U.S.

On behalf of the S2S Coalition, Sonoma Water advocated for enactment of the Weather Act Reauthorization of 2023. As previously reported, the House version of the measure ([H.R. 6093](#)) includes the authorization of two pilot projects on S2S, one of which is focused on western precipitation. The measure would authorize \$45 million per year for five years. On April 29th, H.R. 6093 was approved on a 394-19 vote.

During the quarter, we engaged with Senate lawmakers and staff to advocate for inclusion of the pilot projects in their version of the measure. In September, the S2S Coalition sent a letter of support for [S. 4975](#), the “Smarter Weather Forecasting for Water Management, Farming, and Ranching Act of 2024,” a standalone bill introduced by Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) that would authorize the above-noted pilot projects. While not guaranteed, staff was optimistic that the provisions in S. 4975 would be included in the Senate Weather Act reauthorization, which is expected to be introduced after the 2024 elections. Given strong bipartisan support for the reauthorization, it is hoped that the measure will be enacted before the conclusion of the 118th Congress.

As noted above, the Senate Appropriations Committee in early August approved the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2025. The associated [report](#) includes the language below again calling for a pilot project for S2S precipitation forecasts for water management in the western United States.

Subseasonal to Seasonal Weather Prediction.—Within funding for the U.S. Weather Research Program, the Committee provides not less than \$1,000,000 to continue the subseasonal to seasonal research program to seed innovative research testbeds. Such efforts shall include a pilot project for subseasonal to seasonal precipitation forecasts for water management in the western United States recommended in NOAA’s report to Congress pursuant to section 201 of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (Public Law 115–25). The pilot project should be carried out in coordination with the National Weather Service and should be focused on achieving measurable objectives for operational forecast improvement, including forecasts of seasonal mountain snowpack accumulation and total seasonal precipitation.

As noted above, on September 26th, President Biden signed [H.R. 9747](#), FY2025 Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the federal government at FY24 levels through December 20th.

Issue: Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information

Status: Sonoma Water pursued federal funding for the Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information (AQPI) program. Building on the success of a \$900,000 appropriation that was included in the final FY24 appropriations agreement, efforts are underway to advance support for additional funding in FY25.

As noted above, on September 26th, President Biden signed [H.R. 9747](#), FY2025 Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the federal government at FY24 levels through December 20th.

Issue: Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations

Status: As previously reported, the committee report accompanying the FY24 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act includes \$14 million for the Water Operations Technical Support (WOTS) program, which calls for sustained support for FIRO and for water control manual updates for non- Corps owned high hazard dams where: (1) the Corps has a responsibility for flood control operations under section 7 of the Flood Control Act of 1944; (2) the dam requires coordination of water releases with one or more other high-hazard dams for flood control purposes; and (3) the dam owner is actively investigating the feasibility of applying FIRO technology.

As noted above, on September 26th, President Biden signed [H.R. 9747](#), FY2025 Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the federal government at FY24 levels through December 20th.

Issue: Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund

Status: Following the successful inclusion of \$65 million in the FY24 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Act for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, the FY25 House measure again includes \$65 million for the program, and the Senate legislation includes \$70 million. As noted above, on September 26th, President Biden signed [H.R. 9747](#), FY2025 Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, which funds the federal government at FY24 levels through December 20th. Since its inception in FY2000, due in part to Sonoma Water's leadership and ongoing advocacy efforts, PCSRF has received \$1.815 billion in federal funding to date.

STATE

Issue: Climate Bond

Status: On July 3, 2024, SB 867 (Allen) was passed by the Legislature and signed by acting governor McGuire (both Governor Newsom and Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis were out of the state) to place a \$10 billion climate resilience bond on the November ballot. When Californians head to the polls on November 5, they will have the opportunity to vote for Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024. Proposition 4 includes the following eight distinct funding chapters:

- Water Resilience - \$3.8 billion
- Coastal Resilience - \$1.2 billion
- Biodiversity Protection - \$1.2 billion
- Park Creation - \$700 million
- Wildfire & Forest Resilience
- Extreme Heat Mitigation
- Sustainable Agriculture - \$300 million
- Clean Air/Energy - \$850 million

Sonoma Water organized the Water Bond Coalition to advocate for the passage of SB 867, which proved important with the decision by the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) to take a neutral position on the measure. The absence of ACWA's support was noticed by the Legislature and the Water Bond Coalition's ability to garner support from individual water agencies and districts was a key piece of the advocacy effort. In addition, the Water Bond Coalition's lobbying to include funding for IRWM proved successful as the bond measure includes \$110 million to DWR for projects related to integrated regional water management to improve climate resilience on a watershed basis.

The bond measure also includes an allocation that could potentially fund work on the Potter Valley Project (PVP). In the final few weeks of the bond negotiations, we engaged the Senate Pro Tem's office to discuss and advocate for our bond priorities, most notably PVP. The final text of SB 867 includes \$75 million to the State Coastal Conservancy for projects that "remove outdated or obsolete dams and for related water infrastructure. Projects may also increase climate resilience, enhance sediment supply, improve wildlife and fish passage, and modernize related water infrastructure, including related planning, monitoring, permitting, habitat restoration, and recreational improvements." Conversations with the Pro Tem's Office centered on how this language would work for PVP going forward.

Issue: Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO)

Status: As previously reported, California's FY 2024-25 budget faced a significant deficit of \$45 billion and the Legislature and Governor took action to cut and defer programmatic funding to balance the budget. Included in these actions was a funding reduction of \$1.25 million to DWR's Atmospheric Rivers: Research, Mitigation, and Climate Forecasting Program, which funds FIRO. Additional budget negotiations were had throughout the summer, but, fortunately, no additional cuts were made to FIRO funding.

Key Sacramento legislative dates:

- Dec. 2 - 2025 session commences
- Jan. 6 - legislature reconvenes from winter recess
- Jan. 24 - deadline to submit requests to leg. Counsel
- Feb. 21 - bill introduction deadline
- Apr. 10-21 - Spring Recess
- May 2 - First House policy committee deadline
- May 23 - First House Appropriations deadline
- June 6 - First House Floor deadline
- July 18 - Second House policy committee deadline | summer recess begins
- Aug. 18 - legislature reconvenes from summer recess
- Aug. 29 - Second House Appropriations deadline
- Sept. 12 - Last day of session