



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

AUG 03 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Chair, Natural Resources Subcommittee  
on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Huffman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to the questions for the record submitted following the May 12, 2022, legislative hearing on, among other bills, H.R. 3081, H.R. 6238, H.R. 7612, and H.R. 7632.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti  
Legislative Counsel  
Office of Congressional and  
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Cliff Bentz  
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
House Natural Resources Committee  
Legislative Hearing: H.R. 6238, H.R. 7632, H.R. 7612, and H.R. 3081  
May 12, 2022

**Questions from Representative Mike Levin**

**Question 1: Has demand for the Desalination and Water Purification Program stayed roughly at the same level as the program's original authorization of \$5 million per year?**

**Response:** Over the past 5 years, project funding requests to the Desalination and Water Purification Research (DWPR) Program have averaged \$25 million per year. Of those requests, those found to have technical merit have averaged \$11.5 million per year. The number of proposals has increased approximately 4 times since 2013 and the amount of federal requests has gone up significantly from approximately \$4 million (2013) to approximately \$28.5 million (2022). Although demand for the DWPR program has generally increased over time, funding has been sufficient. Requests for construction funding through the DWPR program vary widely, and in some years amounts to less than what Reclamation makes available.

**Question 2: Given the DWPR program's cap on academic grants, could one say that innovation is limited by the current \$1 million cap on academic research funding, since academic institutions are typically the first to take risks on new technologies?**

**Response:** A significant portion of the projects with technical merit that are ultimately not selected for funding come from academia. This dynamic is the result of the \$1 million cap on academic grants.

**Question 3: How does research on desalination and water purification factor into Reclamation's long-term work to increase drought resilience in areas like my district in Southern California facing increased water scarcity due to climate change?**

**Response:** A large majority of the western United States is experiencing severe or extreme drought conditions. Addressing these challenges and climate change requires using the best available science to develop innovative solutions and to work cooperatively across the landscapes and communities that rely on our western rivers.

Reclamation's DWPR Program provides financial assistance for water treatment research and development, research facilities to host technology developers, and financial assistance for the construction of desalination plants. Developing more cost-effective and low-impact treatment technologies bolsters the ability of Reclamation, its customers, stakeholders, tribal and rural communities to cope with stresses of climate change, including drought.

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**Question 4: How could the renewed authorization offered by my legislation, the Desalination Research Advancement Act, help Reclamation advance more research that will increase the cost effectiveness of desalination and minimize impacts on the environment?**

**Response:** By raising the funding limits for both total research and that carried out by institutions of higher education and binational entities, the Desalination Research Advancement Act provides greater flexibility to fund proposals having technical merit and thereby increase the program's potential to advance desalination efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and environmental sustainability.