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## WRRDA Deal Reached, WIFIA Details Expected This Week

House and Senate negotiators [announced](#) a bipartisan agreement on the “Water Resources Reform and Development Act” (WRRDA) conference report last week, following six months of talks between the two chambers. Details of the deal will not be formally unveiled until this week, but the measure is widely expected to include some form of the “Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act” (WIFIA) that has been supported by AMWA and other water sector organizations.

A WIFIA pilot program that was included last year in the Senate-passed version of WRRDA would authorize EPA to offer low-interest loans for major drinking water and wastewater projects that are expected to cost in excess of \$20 million. This WIFIA would operate independent of the existing Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs but would also be restricted by a provision that would bar the use of tax-exempt financing on WIFIA-funded projects.

The House and Senate could each vote on the final WRRDA agreement before the end of the month. The measure will be brought before each chamber for an up-or-down vote, with no opportunity for lawmakers to offer any amendments.

### This Week in Congress

A procedural vote on a long-discussed energy efficiency bill is scheduled in the Senate this week, but the measure is expected to fail unless senators reach a last-minute deal on several GOP-backed amendments. After work on the efficiency bill is complete, senators are expected to move on to a bill to extend more than \$20 billion of expiring energy tax credits.

The House of Representatives is out of session this week. Members are scheduled to return to Washington on May 19.

## National Climate Assessment Sets Stage for White House Public Outreach Campaign

Following the May 6 unveiling of the third [National Climate Assessment](#) (NCA), the White House has embarked on a public outreach campaign to help the public understand the ramifications of climate change in their own communities and take action.

The outreach campaign began with a series of interviews of President Obama by local and national meteorologists in the White House Rose Garden last week and will continue with Cabinet members and other White House officials making stops across the country to discuss the regional impacts of climate change highlighted in the report.

The White House hopes its public education efforts will change the discussion on climate change. At a news briefing, John Podesta, White House Counselor to the President, said the public understands climate change is happening, but “they don’t feel that sense of urgency.” As noted by White House Science Advisor John Holdren: “The issue still ranks low on salience. But I think that salience is going to go up, and we will see it in the polls and what people communicate to their members of Congress.”

AMWA took the opportunity to do its own outreach on climate change by issuing a [press release](#) urging Congress to pass the “Water Infrastructure Resiliency and Sustainability Act” (H.R. 765 and S. 1508), sponsored by Rep. Lois Capps (D-Calif.) and Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.). The legislation would establish a new EPA-based competitive funding program offering assistance to communities that undertake infrastructure projects to help their water and wastewater systems prepare for, or respond to, the impacts of climate change.

## Value of Water Coalition Will Webcast May 14 Panel on Critical State of U.S. Water Infrastructure

At a time when addressing U.S. water infrastructure must become a national priority, the [Value of Water Coalition](#) will host an in-depth conversation on May 14 on the current condition of the nation’s water infrastructure, the consequences of letting these failing systems worsen and solutions to meeting water challenges. As part of the broader [Infrastructure Week 2014](#) observance, the panel discussion entitled [From Invisible to Invaluable: Changing the Way We Think About Water Infrastructure](#) will be webcast from The Newseum in Washington, D.C. from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET.

Cathleen Kelly, Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, will moderate a panel including: Ed Pinero, Chief Sustainability Officer, Veolia North America; George Hawkins, General Manager, DC Water; Ken Kopocis, Senior Advisor for Water, U.S. EPA; Mark Strauss, Senior Vice President of Corporate Strategy and Business Development, American Water; and Tony Parrott, Executive Director, Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati.

The event will feature a live Twitter conversation. Questions for the panel can be tweeted to



@TheValueOfWater with the hashtag #valueofwater.

## House Panel Approves Level NOAA Funding, Stresses Focus on Weather Forecasting

The House Appropriations Committee last week advanced an FY15 spending bill that would fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at just below its FY14 amount while directing the agency to “prioritize resources on its operational weather forecasting mission.”

The language was included in the FY15 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill, which House appropriators [approved](#) last week on a bipartisan voice vote. The measure would provide NOAA with just over \$5.3 billion next year – about \$5 million below its current funding level and nearly \$200 million below the funding requested by President Obama.

While NOAA would see flat funding overall, House appropriators would boost the National Weather Service budget by \$16 million above the Administration request, to \$943 million. This is part of an effort by lawmakers to highlight investment in shorter-term forecasting, which also includes full funding for the Joint Polar Satellite System weather satellite program and the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite, which the panel says will “help maintain and improve weather forecasting to warn communities about potentially devastating natural disasters.” Conversely, the measure would cut NOAA’s climate research budget to \$119 million, \$37 million below its FY14 funding level.

The Appropriations Committee report that accompanies the legislation includes several other references to the need for NOAA to focus on “its mission-critical responsibilities,” such as research that brings “near-term, affordable, and attainable advances in observational, computing, and modeling capabilities to deliver substantial improvements in weather forecasting.” The report also directs NOAA not to divert funding from weather forecasting activities to support climate modeling.

The full House of Representatives is expected to consider the Commerce-Justice-Science spending bill in the coming weeks. The Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to unveil its own version of the legislation.

## Senator Pushes Energy-Water Nexus Research, Collaboration

The federal government should partner with the private sector and academic institutions to support research into the interdependencies between energy and water use, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) said last week.

Murkowski, the top Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, made her remarks during a [speech](#) in Washington, D.C. She said a coordinated public-private approach to energy-water nexus issues would promote economic growth and lead to the discovery of breakthrough technologies in energy and water resiliency.



“The federal government can and should facilitate this exchange of information on a national scale,” she said. “All [stakeholders] can team up to advance a better understanding of the energy-water nexus, adopt better practices through technological innovations, and learn from each other about procedures and implementation strategies.”

Murkowski also announced the release of a [white paper](#) from her office that examines the importance of the energy-water nexus to the U.S. economy. The paper argues that technological innovations are central to ensuring sustainable energy and water use in this country and recommends reaching this objective through efforts to address data gaps, facilitate public-private partnerships, document best practices and encourage efficient technologies.

Earlier this year Murkowski introduced the “Nexus of Energy and Water for Sustainability (NEWS) Act” (S. 1971), which would direct the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy to establish a committee to coordinate and streamline federal energy and water nexus activities. The bill has yet to advance.

## **Second NDWAC Lead and Copper Rule Working Group Meeting Announced**

EPA has announced the dates for the second in-person meeting of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) Working Group. The meeting, the second in a series that will take place over the next year to evaluate and make recommendations for potential revisions to the LCR, is scheduled for May 29 and 30 in Arlington, Va. The first in-person meeting was held in March and focused on issues related to optimization of corrosion control. The upcoming meeting will focus on LCR sample site selection criteria.

AMWA utilities are represented on the working group, and AMWA staff will be attending the meeting, but attendance is also open to any interested stakeholders. Details on logistics and registration for the meeting are included in the [Federal Register notice](#) announcing the meeting.

## **EPA Webcast Addresses Financing Climate Adaptation Strategies**

On Wednesday, May 28, from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., EPA will host the next event in its Climate Ready Water Utilities webinar series. Using utility case studies, the webcast will offer an introduction to ways different utilities around the country are effectively financing and implementing adaptation strategies. [Additional information about the webinar series](#) and [registration](#) for the May 28 event are available online.

### **Member Survey On Fall Meeting Program Closes Friday**

AMWA’s [survey](#) requesting member input on topics and

speakers for its 2014 Annual Executive Management Conference will close this Friday, May 16. The conference, to be held October 19-22 in Newport Beach, Calif., is designed to meet the needs of water executives, and recommendations are sought on sessions that would make the meeting most beneficial for leadership development and promoting excellence in utility management.