



September 7, 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chair, Senate Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Chair, House Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), I thank you for your work on the fiscal year (FY) 2019 Interior-Environment appropriations bills and for your leadership in moving the bills through each of your chambers in a timely fashion. I also write to urge that the strongest possible support for important research and other programs prevail in conference.

As the House and Senate Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittees work to reconcile positions on funding for FY2019, APLU encourages you to make research and higher education programs a priority. These investments continue to demonstrate a significant return -- growing our economy and improving the health and wellbeing of our society. Specifically, APLU highlights the following programs in your bill: the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Water Resources Research Institutes (WRI) and Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Units (CRUs) at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Science and Technology (S&T), and the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP).

The NEH is a vital source of funds for scholars and researchers whose work helps citizens and policymakers alike better understand and address the social, economic, political and cultural challenges facing our nation and world today. APLU thanks you for proposing \$155 million for the NEH in FY2019, an increase of \$2 million over FY2018. We strongly support this funding level.

The USGS plays a vital role in research and science involving water, minerals and other natural resources on which we all rely. Some USGS programs provide support for university researchers to contribute to these efforts. For example, USGS' WRRIs are essential to solving state, regional and inter-jurisdictional water resources problems with federal funding serving as the driving

force of collaboration in water research and education. There are 54 WRRIs based at a university in each state and four territories. The WRRIs serve each state and territory and contribute significantly to pertinent water research efforts such as emergency planning and hurricane recovery, protecting groundwater aquifers from sea water intrusion and reducing water treatment costs. Although both the House and Senate bills would provide flat funding for the Institutes, APLU urges you to consider an appropriation of \$9 million, a boost of \$2.5 million over FY2018, to allow the WRRIs to take on additional important state and regional water issues.

APLU and our campuses are grateful that both the House and Senate Subcommittees rejected the proposal to eliminate the valuable USGS CRUs and we strongly recommend that you provide the House-proposed level of \$19.3 million in FY2019, an increase of \$1.9 million over current levels. The CRUs target the interface of science and management and are crucial to successfully addressing the many natural resource management challenges across the nation.

Additionally, APLU strongly encourages you to fund EPA S&T at \$746 million in FY2019. EPA S&T provides important support for scientific research that helps the U.S. understand various environmental risks to human health and ecosystems, and for technology development that leads to the creation of innovative solutions to tackle some of the nation's pressing environmental problems.

Finally, we highlight the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP), which in recent years has seen a precipitous decline in funding, from nearly \$13 million in FY2016 to \$3 million currently. This reduction has occurred while the incidences of wildfires and tragedies associated with them have only escalated. We advocate that you restore funding for the JFSP (through the USDA Forest Service's Wildland Fire Management and the Department of Interior Wildland Fire Management accounts) and thereby allow the critical research of this program to resume at a level more aligned with the current need.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Please consider APLU a resource as you work to finalize the FY2019 Interior-Environment appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson  
President  
APLU

cc: Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Richard Shelby  
House Appropriations Committee Chair Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy  
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey  
Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies