ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC & LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

FY 2025 APPROPRIATIONS PRIORITIES

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

FINAL REQUEST

AGENCY	ACCOUNT	APLU FY2025 FINAL REQUEST
U.S. Geological Survey	Water Resources Research Act	$18 million
	Cooperative Research Units	$32 million
Environmental Protection Agency	Office of Science and Technology (S&T)/STAR Research and Fellowships	$876 million
National Endowment for the Humanities	National Endowment for the Humanities	$225 million
Interior	Joint Fire Science Program	$20 million

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY (USGS)

WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH ACT (WRRA) PROGRAM

APLU FY2025 REQUEST: $18 MILLION

FY2025 PBR = $0; FY2024 = $15.5 MILLION; FY2023 = $15.5 MILLION

APLU requests $18 million for the Water Resources Research Act Program in FY25 to support research on water and related phenomena, aid entry of new research scientists into related professions, train future water scientists and engineers, and distribute results of sponsored research to water managers and the public. This support takes the forms of research, education, and outreach. In partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, the water institutes have a 50-year history of assisting all members of the water-user communities[1]. There are 54 state Water Resources Research Institutes (WRRI) or Centers organized as the National Institutes for Water Resources (NIWR), with one NIWR is in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam. State programs match the federally administered funds— sometimes by a ratio of two to one—to address local, state, and regional needs.

The NIWR cooperates with the USGS to support, coordinate, and facilitate research by offering Annual Base Grants, National Competitive Grants, and Coordination Grants and operating the NIWR-USGS Student Internship Program. As a result, both undergraduate and graduate students explore new ideas and learn new skills.

State and local funds through the WRRA program support superior long-term water planning and management in areas such as combating harmful algal blooms, mitigating drought effects, and protecting against soil erosion. Additionally, increased funding will allow WRRI and the

USGS to support special research topics such as aquatic invasive species (AIS) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that threaten our nation's waterways. The Institutes collaborate with over 150 state agencies, 180 federal agencies, and more than 165 local and municipal offices and support over 350 students in training, over 200 research projects, and more than 550 researchers per year. As the nation's water challenges increase, with additional resources the Institutes are poised to grow their partnership with the USGS to tackle critical problems related to water-related hazards, water quality, and water availability.

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH UNITS (CRUS)
APLU FY2025 REQUEST: $32 MILLION
FY2025 PBR = $29.7 MILLION; FY2024 = $28.2 MILLION; FY2023 = $28.2 MILLION

The USGS CRUs consists of 43 units within 41 states. Each unit is a collaborative partnership between the USGS, the state natural resource agency, the host university, and the Wildlife Management Institute. CRU research programs are guided by these management agencies so that the science and decision-making tools they develop effectively bridge the gap between state and federal agencies and non-governmental players. CRUs are the research arm of state fish and wildlife and federal natural resource agencies, providing them with the science to support sustainable hunting, fishing, and trapping seasons that drive the American system of conservation funding. Additionally, the units work with university students to develop the conservation workforce pipeline, help decision-makers make complex conservation decisions, and provide technical assistance between natural resource agencies and universities.

APLU requests $32 million for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Cooperative Research Unit (CRU) Program in FY25 to fill the significant number of CRU vacancies that continue to erode collective capacity, fund longstanding requests for new programs in unrepresented states, and provide a source of operational funds for scientists. APLU also supports an increase to expand initiatives for youth involvement in science and resource management.

Resource agencies partner with the CRUs for four primary reasons:

1. To conduct science-based fish and wildlife research and answer management questions.
2. To provide highly cost-effective and productive applied science and research.
3. To support a scientific workforce capable of addressing pressing needs
4. To professionally train the next generation of fish and wildlife biologists who support and understand state and federal agencies' natural resource management needs, goals, and objectives.

In FY22, CRU scientists were engaged in over 800 research projects, many targeting conservation efforts for our nation's most important and iconic species such as elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, pronghorn, moose, black bear, mountain lion, turkey, Canada goose, sage grouse, northern bobwhite, rainbow trout, Chinook salmon, and largemouth bass. These projects supported 1,100 students and staff and garnered an additional $25 to 40 million in state

and federal research funding.[1] APLU urges Congress to support the Units with funding of $32 million for FY25 to protect and sustain our nation's valued fish and wildlife resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (S&T)

APLU FY2025 REQUEST: $876 MILLION

FY2025 PBR = $1.009 BILLION; FY2024 = $758.1 MILLION; FY2023 = $802.3 MILLION

APLU urges Congress to fund the Environmental Protection Agency Science and Technology account (S&T) at $876 million in FY25, of which $40 million is requested for the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) Program to support science-based, cost-effective solutions to the nation's environmental and public health challenges. This requested increase to the S&T account would provide increased support to STAR research, but would also restore the STAR Graduate Fellowship program, and support the development of investigator-driven research.

Within the S&T account, the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program provides research grants to universities across the country, pioneering new technologies and strengthening the workforce pipeline. In 2017, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) assessed the program, finding that STAR has valuable scientific impact and that its merits also extend to numerous other aspects of public life, including public health decisions, reductions in regulatory compliance costs, workforce development, and research infrastructure.[i]

Despite these merits, funding for STAR has deteriorated consistently from a peak of $138 million in FY02 to $28.6 million in recent years. In FY21, Congress encouraged the EPA to revitalize STAR by exploring programmatic changes recommended by NASEM, which included reinstating the STAR Graduate Research Program as well as developing a mechanism for investigator-initiated research. Unfortunately, S&T funding was held flat, limiting EPA's capability to make changes. Before its termination, the STAR Graduate Fellowship program served as the workforce pipeline program for graduate student researchers in the environmental (toxicology, pollution chemistry, etc.) and public health sciences. The program helped offset costs associated with obtaining an advanced degree in the environmental and environmental health sciences while exposing promising students to careers in environmental science. APLU requests an increase in S&T to support STAR research and to restore the STAR Graduate Fellowship program.

<u>Report Language</u>

Science to Achieve Results (STAR). — The Committee recognizes the importance of STAR to supporting research that is critical to the Agency's scientific mission and so provides $40,000,000 for activities supported therein. The Committee intends that this increase will enable the Agency to accommodate the following programmatic changes proposed by Congress in the explanatory report accompanying P.L. 116-260: initial implementation of a mechanism for the submission of unsolicited, principle investigator-initiated proposals within STAR to

[1] https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1505/cir1505.pdf

capture innovative research ideas that may exist outside the Agency but that hold potential for advancing its mission; and reestablishment of the STAR Graduate Fellowship program in service of developing the next-generation multidisciplinary environmental science workforce.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

APLU FY2025 REQUEST: $225 MILLION

FY2025 PBR = $200 MILLION; FY2024 = $207 MILLION; FY2023 = $207 MILLION

APLU requests $225 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities as a key step in rebuilding funding capacity and strengthening the program's impact.

NEH grants are awarded on a merit-reviewed basis to organizations and institutions in every U.S. state and territory, providing a vital source of funds for scholars and researchers whose work illuminates social, economic, political, and cultural challenges facing our nation and world today. Yet, funding shortages limit the potential impact and reach of NEH. Federal investment in NEH is critical to bridging divides between communities that aid in confronting difficult issues through initiatives such as "A More Perfect Union," which focuses on projects that catalog, preserve, explain, and promote American history. Additionally, increased federal funding for the NEH is essential to preserving cultural heritage and local history, including important historical documents and artifacts. As an example, created through a federal partnership between NEH and the National Science Foundation, the Documenting Endangered Languages program provides grants with the goal of recording and protecting the languages of Native American tribes throughout the U.S.

The NEH also plays a critical role in stimulating private investment in local economies. Created in 1977, the NEH Challenge Grants program has raised more than $3 billion in private support for humanities projects by leveraging federal funds at a ratio of three to one. Furthermore, NEH's investment in historic sites and museums across the United States has played a critical role in developing and maintaining local tourist economies.

JOINT FIRE SCIENCE PROGRAM (JFSP)

APLU FY2025 REQUEST: $20 MILLION

FY2025 PBR = $8 MILLION; FY2024 = $6 MILLION; FY2023 = $9 MILLION

APLU urges Congress to fund the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) at $20 million in FY25, with $10 million in the U.S. Department of Interior Wildland Fire Management budget and $10 million in the USDA Forest Service budget. There is an urgent need to address the nation's increasingly devastating wildfires. For example, more than 56,580 wildfires burned 2.7 million acres in 2022. The 2022 Fire Year was one of the most extensive on record.[ii] APLU requests additional funding to support wildfire research to help combat increased frequency and severity.

JFSP projects address salient issues such as understanding smoke impacts, identifying drivers of fire costs, analyzing fire behavior, and understanding fire effects on resources and communities. Increased support is needed to enable wildland managers and county/state government officials to anticipate, mitigate, and respond to risks and impacts of increasing wildfires by better understanding wildfire dynamics and suppression/prevention techniques[iii]. Increased support will enable research to support preparation, prevention, and resilience instead of only focusing on response.

Importantly Congress has direct oversight of the JFSP and its research priorities. The program operates as a partnership of six federal land management agencies and universities that work collectively to identify and address the most pressing challenges of managing wildfires and the surrounding impacted environment. University researchers work with the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Interior together to give direct and actionable information to best combat the growing numbers and intensity of wildfires. As a result, JFSP matches applied science with on-the-ground fire management needs. In addition, the JFSP research priorities are funded via competitive awards that require outreach to fire managers and local, state, and regional policymakers, helping connect scientific innovations to on-the-ground practical needs.

[i] https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/24757/chapter/1
[ii] https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/nfn
[iii] https://www.firescience.gov/Digest/FSdigest24.pdf