



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

September 4, 2018

H.R. 4419 **Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Indian Affairs Water Project Streamlining Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on May 16, 2018

SUMMARY

H.R. 4419 would authorize the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to construct projects for water storage, aquifer recharge, fish conservation, and water supply for certain rural communities. The bill also would direct BOR and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to accelerate studies related to their approval or denial of permits needed to construct water infrastructure projects. Under the bill, BOR and BIA would be required to limit the cost and time to complete each study, to construct a publicly accessible database to provide information about the status of each study, and to act as the lead agency in coordinating with state and federal agencies to expedite the environmental reviews necessary to complete those studies.

Using information provided by BOR and BIA, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 4419 would cost \$174 million over the 2019-2023 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized and necessary amounts.

Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

H.R. 4419 would not increase direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

H.R. 4419 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary effect of H.R. 4419 is shown in the following table. The costs of the legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars						2019- 2023
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION							
BOR Water Resources Infrastructure							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	21	34	34	34	26	148
Estimated Outlays	0	12	25	32	34	29	132
Streamlining Feasibility Studies							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	8	6	6	5	5	31
Estimated Outlays	0	6	6	6	5	5	29
Accelerating Feasibility Studies, Planning, and Design							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	3	3	3	3	2	14
Estimated Outlays	0	2	3	3	3	3	13
Total Changes							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	32	43	43	42	34	193
Estimated Outlays	0	20	34	41	42	37	174

Amounts may not sum to totals because of rounding; BOR = Bureau of Reclamation.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 4419 will be enacted near the end of 2018 and that the authorized and necessary amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Estimates of amounts necessary to implement the bill are based on information from BOR and BIA; estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar projects and programs. Major components of the estimated costs are described below.

BOR Water Resources Infrastructure

The bill would authorize BOR to construct three new projects or separable elements of ongoing projects. CBO estimates that the total public and private cost to complete those projects would be about \$930 million. H.R. 4419 would authorize the appropriation of \$187 million to cover the federal share. Of that amount, CBO estimates that \$148 million would need to be appropriated over the 2019-2023 period (assuming historical rates of spending for similar projects). Nonfederal entities would be responsible for the remaining \$740 million in costs. CBO estimates that outlays would total \$132 million over the 2019-2023 period. After 2023, federal costs to complete the projects would amount to about \$55 million.

To estimate how appropriated funds would be spent, CBO used information from BOR about when construction for each project could begin, how long it would take to

complete, and what funding would be necessary over the anticipated construction period. Construction schedules and the pattern of spending for such projects are uncertain and plans are subject to change because of delays in obtaining funding and other unforeseen circumstances.

Finally, H.R. 4419 would direct BOR to identify projects that are no longer feasible and to establish a process for reauthorizing inactive projects that are no longer in the federal interest, have not received sufficient funding, or lack local support.

Streamlining Feasibility Studies

With the aim of streamlining the process of preparing feasibility studies for proposed projects, H.R. 4419 would require BOR and BIA to consult with Indian tribes, states, and federal agencies about approaches to better coordinate environmental reviews and to report on any possible efficiencies. The bill would direct the agencies to identify water projects previously excluded from environmental reviews because they were determined to have no significant effect on the environment and to develop guidelines based on those results to identify similar new projects that also could be excluded from such reviews. The bill would direct BOR and BIA to act as the lead agency for the projects under their respective authority. That role would include coordinating with states, federal agencies, and the public to expedite environmental reviews; to facilitate the early detection and resolution of environmental issues; and to construct publicly accessible databases that would list requirements for each study and provide information on progress toward completing each requirement.

H.R. 4419 also would require BOR and BIA to use the *Federal Register* to solicit proposals each year from nonfederal entities to build water infrastructure projects and to report to the Congress on the preliminary costs and benefits of each proposal.

CBO estimates that implementing those provisions would have an average annual cost of about \$6 million (roughly the equivalent of 40 full-time employees) for each agency to prepare an annual report about projects proposed by nonfederal entities, to develop and implement a plan for coordinating environmental reviews, and to develop guidelines for excluding projects from environmental reviews. Over the 2019-2023 period, those costs would total \$29 million.

Accelerating Feasibility Studies, Planning, and Design

H.R. 4419 would direct BOR and BIA to expedite the completion of current feasibility studies to approve or deny construction of water infrastructure projects. The responsible agency would proceed immediately to preconstruction planning and design if the study recommended construction. Typically, the agencies do not proceed with preconstruction planning and design until the Congress enacts legislation to authorize construction.

For new studies initiated after enactment, the bill would limit the cost of feasibility studies conducted by BOR or BIA to \$3 million each and would require each study to be completed within three years. If a study could not be completed under those limitations, the responsible agency would be required to provide written notice to the Congress and any other agencies involved explaining why completing the study would cost more than \$3 million or would take more than three years.

CBO estimates that annual costs to implement those provisions would total \$3 million (or the equivalent of 18 full-time employees) to expedite the completion of current feasibility studies and for work associated with preconstruction planning and design. Over the 2019-2023 period those costs would total \$13 million.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INCREASE IN LONG-TERM DIRECT SPENDING AND DEFICITS

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 4419 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

MANDATES

H.R. 4419 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

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