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NATION'S LARGEST SOURCE OF FRESH WATER – GROUND WATER – NEEDS MORE STUDY, NATIONAL GROUND WATER ASSOCIATION TELLS U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE

In considering the nation's increasing demand for water, the federal government should support efforts to study the largest source of available fresh water – ground water, said the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) Tuesday in testimony before the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Although ground water makes up roughly 95 percent of the earth's fresh water supply, "Few states have sufficient information necessary to adequately understand the potential yield of their aquifers," NGWA Member David Wunsch told the committee.

NGWA was among 22 groups selected by Senate committee to present and discuss their proposed solutions to the challenges of meeting the nation's ever-increasing demand for water at a half-day Bipartisan Water Conference. NGWA was chosen to speak on the topic, "Knowledge of Water Resources."

In a survey of 28 states, NGWA identified increased federal funding for cooperative ground water quantity and quality data collection and aquifer mapping as the most useful actions the federal government could take. "NGWA members consistently stated that the most useful and efficient action the federal government could take would be to increase federal funding for cooperative ground water programs and data collection" Wunsch said. The National Cooperative Geological Mapping Program was given as a good example of a successful program.

Specific activities meriting additional discussion include:

* DATA GAPS – there is a need for a national clearing house for ground water information and data, including real-time data, help maximize everyone's data-gathering efforts.
* RESEARCH PRIORITY AREAS – Top priorities for development of long-term ground water sustainability plans include research on water reuse and conservation; alternative treatment systems; development of brackish ground water supplies; aquifer storage and recovery or artificial recharge; emerging contaminants and the development of remediation technologies; and the development of models and data standards.
* EDUCATION – We need to educate the public nationwide so they will understand the urgent need for exercising responsible water use.

"No study of our nation's water supplies can be complete without a clearer picture of our ground water resources. One key to success is a vigorous federal role in funding cooperative efforts with state and local governments to address data gaps," Wunsch said.

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