

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To authorize the Director of the United States Geological Survey to establish a regional program to assess, monitor, and benefit the hydrology of saline lakes in the Great Basin and the migratory birds and other wildlife dependent on those habitats, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Mr. ROMNEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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**A BILL**

To authorize the Director of the United States Geological Survey to establish a regional program to assess, monitor, and benefit the hydrology of saline lakes in the Great Basin and the migratory birds and other wildlife dependent on those habitats, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Saline Lake Eco-  
5 systems in the Great Basin States Program Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. SALINE LAKE ECOSYSTEMS IN THE GREAT BASIN**  
2 **STATES ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING PRO-**  
3 **GRAM.**

4 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 (1) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means  
6 the Saline Lake Ecosystems in the Great Basin  
7 States Assessment and Monitoring Program estab-  
8 lished under subsection (b).

9 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
10 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-  
11 rector of the United States Geological Survey.

12 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish  
13 a Saline Lake Ecosystems in the Great Basin States As-  
14 sessment and Monitoring Program to assess and monitor  
15 the hydrology of saline lake ecosystems in the Great Basin  
16 and the migratory birds and other wildlife that depend on  
17 those ecosystems to inform and support coordinated man-  
18 agement and conservation actions to benefit those eco-  
19 systems, migratory birds, and other wildlife.

20 (c) WORK AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Under the Program, the  
22 Secretary, in coordination with the Director of the  
23 United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the en-  
24 tities described in paragraph (2), shall establish a  
25 multiyear work and implementation plan to assess,  
26 monitor, and conserve saline lake ecosystems in the

1 Great Basin and the migratory birds and other wild-  
2 life that depend on those ecosystems.

3 (2) COORDINATING ENTITIES.—The entities re-  
4 ferred to in paragraph (1) include—

5 (A) Federal, State, Tribal, and local agen-  
6 cies;

7 (B) institutions of higher education;

8 (C) nonprofit organizations; and

9 (D) other local stakeholders.

10 (3) INCLUSIONS.—The work and implementa-  
11 tion plan established under paragraph (1) shall in-  
12 clude—

13 (A) a synthesis of available information,  
14 literature, and data, and an assessment of sci-  
15 entific and informational needs, relating to—

16 (i) water quantity, water quality,  
17 water use, and water demand;

18 (ii) migratory bird and other wildlife  
19 populations, habitats, and ecology;

20 (iii) annual lifecycle needs of migra-  
21 tory birds; and

22 (iv) environmental changes and other  
23 stressors, including climatic stressors;

24 (B) a description of how the plan should  
25 be implemented to address the scientific and in-

1           formational needs described in subparagraph  
2           (A), including proposed activities, such as moni-  
3           toring, data infrastructure needs, and develop-  
4           ment of tools necessary to implement the Pro-  
5           gram;

6                   (C) recommendations and a cost assess-  
7           ment for the implementation of the plan; and

8                   (D) such other matters as the Secretary  
9           determines to be appropriate.

10           (4) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the  
11           date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall  
12           submit to Congress a report describing the work and  
13           implementation plan established under paragraph  
14           (1).

15           (d) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall imple-  
16           ment the Program based on the information, findings, and  
17           recommendations contained in the work and implementa-  
18           tion plan established under subsection (c).

19           (e) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS.—  
20           Using such sums as the Secretary considers to be appro-  
21           priate of amounts made available for each fiscal year  
22           under subsection (g), the Secretary may enter into cooper-  
23           ative funding agreements with, or provide grants to, enti-  
24           ties described in subsection (c)(2) for the purposes of—

1           (1) participating in developing, or providing in-  
2           formation to inform the development of, the work  
3           and implementation plan under subsection (c);

4           (2) carrying out assessments and monitoring of  
5           water quality, quantity, use, and demand under the  
6           Program; and

7           (3) carrying out ecological, biological, and avian  
8           assessments and monitoring under the Program.

9           (f) EFFECT.—The work and implementation plan es-  
10          tablished under subsection (c)(1) shall not affect—

11           (1) any interstate water compacts in existence  
12           on the date of enactment of this Act, including full  
13           development of any apportionment made in accord-  
14           ance with those compacts;

15           (2) valid and existing water rights in any State  
16           located wholly or partially within the Great Basin;

17           (3) water rights held by the United States in  
18           the Great Basin; and

19           (4) the management and operation of Bear  
20           Lake or Stewart Dam, including the storage, man-  
21           agement, and release of water.

22           (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
23          authorized to be appropriated to carry out the Program  
24          \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2027.