CONGRESSWOMAN
SUSIE LEE
SERVING NEVADA'S 3RD DISTRICT

Bipartisan, Bicameral *OpenET Act*

Led by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)

The need:

- The devastating impacts of increased drought across the Western U.S. and a changing climate nationwide have made sustainable water management an urgent issue.
- To maximize the benefits of our water supplies, we must know how much water is available and how much is being used. Evapotranspiration (ET) is a measure of the water that is consumed and removed from a water system, and it represents the largest share of water use in most arid environments around the world. Accurate information on ET is critical for us to balance water supply and demand, as well as to ensure that adequate water resources for beneficial uses are available over time.
- To date, access to ET data has been limited, inconsistent, and expensive, which keeps the data out of the hands of most water users and decision-makers and impedes good water management.

What is the OpenET program?

- Developed through a unique public-private partnership, the OpenET program as it exists today uses the best available science and publicly available data from multiple satellites and weather stations to provide easily accessible estimates of ET for improved water management across 17 Western states.
- The program brings together an ensemble of well-established methods to calculate ET at the field scale — and makes data on this key water metric widely accessible to farmers, landowners, and water managers.
- Applications of this data include:
    - Assisting users and decision-makers to **better manage resources and protect financial viability of farm operations in light of the changing climate**;
    - **Developing more accurate water budgets** and innovative management programs to better **promote conservation and sustainability efforts**; and
    - **Employing data-driven groundwater management practices** and understanding impacts of consumptive water use.

What this bill does:

- This bill formally establishes an Open Access Evapotranspiration Data Program within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to support the generation and distribution of satellite-based ET data to sustain and enhance water resources in the United States.
- It supports the nationwide expansion of OpenET.
- It directs USGS to coordinate and consult with federal agencies and program partners on the incorporation and use of data from OpenET into models, reports, and decision support tools.

- It helps sustain and advance OpenET technology to ensure that data produced by the program is reflective of the best available science for the benefit of farmers, landowners, and water managers.
- It provides support for trainings and outreach for agricultural producers as well as local, state, federal and Tribal land and water resource managers.

Endorsements:

- Desert Research Institute
- Environmental Defense Fund
- National Audubon Society
- Sustainable Conservation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Trout Unlimited
- Water Foundation
- California State Water Resources Control Board
- California's Central Delta Water Agency
- California's South Delta Water Agency
- Central Utah Water Conservancy District
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
- Nevada Division of Water Resources
- Oregon Water Resources Department
- Southern Nevada Water Authority
- Western States Water Council
- Wyoming State Engineer's Office
- E&J Gallo Winery

"The Nevada Division of Water Resources strongly supports the continued development and public accessibility of OpenET. This outstanding program directly benefits water users throughout Nevada and the west who strive to improve efficiency and conserve water. Public access to these data will be increasingly vital to support water users and responsible water management needs into the future."
Adam Sullivan, Nevada State Engineer, Nevada Division of Water Resources

"OpenET will allow water managers to assess how much water is being used via a cost-effective and easy-to-use web-based platform, filling a critical data gap in water management across the U.S. The Authority believes OpenET is a valuable tool for federal, state, and local policymakers and water users."
Zane Marshall, Director, Water Resources, Southern Nevada Water Authority

"OpenET will provide credible, transparent, automated, easily accessible consumptive water use data, through a broad network of collaborators also developing and refining operational applications. No such system can provide more easy access to more timely data with more refined spatial coverage. Currently, access to satellite and ET data is limited and expensive to process and interpret for many water users and decision-makers."
Tony Willardson, Executive Director, Western States Water Council

"The development of OpenET is fundamental to filling a data black hole related to consumptive use of water. We are thrilled with the prospects it provides for improved, informed water management at the scale of basin and farm, alike. OpenET will be an essential

tool for optimizing water use, especially in the agricultural sector, where roughly 80% of Utah's water is used. The passage of the *Open Access Evapotranspiration Data Act* is crucial to making every drop count, at a time when every drop really does count."
Bart Leeflang, Colorado River Program Manager, Central Utah Water Conservancy District

"As the Western United States experiences a more water-constrained environment and effects from climate change, having thorough and accurate data is imperative to understanding how we must operate. Production and access to OpenET data, as described in the *Open Access Evapotranspiration Data Act* is the most effective way to broadly distribute this information and to better understand evapotranspiration for water management. We need to know what we have in order to best utilize our resources."
Oregon State Representative Mark Owens (R - Crane, House District 60)

"It's more important than ever to provide consistent, accurate information to water users and water managers to allow them to make the most efficient decisions about water use," said DRI President Kumud Acharya. "OpenET is an innovative approach that provides agricultural water users and water managers access to the same information on consumptive water use. I appreciate the leadership of Nevada Senator Catherine Cortez Masto and Nevada Congresswoman Susie Lee on this important piece of legislation."
Dr. Kumud Acharya, President, Desert Research Institute

"OpenET has been developed in close collaboration with partners from agriculture, cities, irrigation districts and other stakeholders across the West. OpenET is a forward-looking tool for supporting TU's goals of water conservation and meaningful water allocation to promote the sustainability of both agriculture and watershed health."
Sara Porterfield, Western Water Policy Advisor, Trout Unlimited

"As climate change puts more pressure on increasingly scarce water supplies in arid regions, we need new, innovative tools like OpenET to manage water more precisely and sustainably. Passage of the *Open Access Evapotranspiration Data Act* will ensure that OpenET provides all farmers, policymakers and communities big and small with the same crucial high-quality water data, so that we can all work together from the same playbook to develop more resilient water supplies across the West."
Robyn Grimm, Director, Climate Resilient Water Systems, Environmental Defense Fund

"As a headwater state with seven interstate compacts and three court decrees prescribing the flow of water out of state, the State of Wyoming has numerous obligations and needs for measuring or reporting agricultural consumptive water use. Yet, like many states, Wyoming has limited access to timely data or resources helpful in meeting those needs. OpenET would provide the State of Wyoming with more accurate and timely estimates of key variables needed for measuring and reporting water use and consumption. If funded as proposed and made available to users at little or no cost, we would have a tremendous tool for calculating and reporting agricultural water use which helps satisfy our interstate obligations while also sustaining and enhancing our water resources."
Brandon Gebhart, Wyoming State Engineer, Wyoming State Engineer's Office

For more information or to cosponsor or endorse this bill, please contact Mark Coombs in Congresswoman Susie Lee's office at mark.coombs@mail.house.gov.