WASHINGTON, DC, March 4, 2014 (ENS) – President Obama today released a $3.9 trillion budget plan for Fiscal Year 2015 with many green features, including funds for his Climate Action Plan and a new Climate Resiliency Fund.

President Barack Obama signs copies of the FY 2015 Budget as Sylvia Mathews Burwell, director, Office of Management and Budget, and OMB staff look on in the Oval Office, March 4, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

President Obama said today, “This budget adheres to the spending levels that both parties in both houses of Congress already agreed to. But it also builds on that progress with what we’re calling an Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative that invests in our economic priorities in a smart way that is fully paid for by making smart spending cuts and closing tax loopholes that right now only benefit the well-off and the well-connected.”

“Our budget is about choices,” Obama said. “It’s about our values. As a country, we’ve got to make a decision if we’re going to protect tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, or if we’re going to make smart investments necessary to create jobs and grow our economy, and expand opportunity for every American.”

“The American people have made clear time and again which approach they prefer. That’s the approach that my budget offers,” he said. “That’s why I’m going to fight for it this year and in the years to come as President.”

Billion Dollar Climate Resilience Fund
The $56 billion Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative, split evenly between defense and non-defense funding, allots $1 billion for a Climate Resilience Fund, which invests in research to better understand the projected impacts of a changing climate and help communities plan and prepare.

White House Office of Management and Budget Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell today called the Climate Resilience Fund, “an innovative piece of work.”

Burwell said, “We take very seriously our partnership with state, local and tribal governments who are engaged now in deliberate work to prepare and coordinate planning for the impacts of climate change, including the extreme weather conditions which many parts of the country have been experiencing.”

“It includes investing in research and unlocking data, and helping communities plan and prepare, and funding breakthrough technologies and resilient infrastructure that will help communities across the country better prepare for the effects of climate change,” she said.

With California in the grip of the worst drought in state history and the East and Midwest lashed by record-setting snow storms, the support for Obama’s new Climate Resilience Fund is strong.

The Climate Resilience Fund meets with the approval of National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson. “The President’s proposed Climate Resilience Fund will provide farmers and ranchers with much-needed assistance after extreme weather events, which are occurring with increasing frequency,” he said.

“I hope Congress follows the President’s lead and takes action to comprehensively address global climate change in a way that engages and recognizes the valuable contributions the agricultural community can make to reducing our nation’s carbon footprint,” said Johnson.

Steve Winkelman, director of the Center for Clean Air Policy’s adaptation and transportation programs, called the budget proposal “an important benchmark in the battle against climate change,” in part because of the Climate Resilience Fund.

“This Climate Resilience Fund is fiscally smart. Hazard mitigation measures yield more than a $4 return for every $1 invested. If we prepare better now, we can trim disaster aid in the future and reduce the financial exposure of both the federal government and American businesses,” Winkelman said.

“The Climate Resilience Fund will help save taxpayers billions of dollars annually, will provide greater protection to the public in the face of increasing extreme weather events, reduce human suffering, reduce business interruption and create more resilient housing and infrastructure,” he said.

**Nearly Eight Billion for Environmental Protection**

The $7.89 billion requested for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would fund core environmental and health protections such as climate change and air quality, toxics, chemical safety and clean water and environmental justice, while trimming the EPA request by nearly $310 million below what the agency has this year.
EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said, “Our request focuses our resources on the things that really matter to the people of this country. We will seek to make a visible difference – whether it is protecting our precious waters and leaving our children a legacy so they can safely drink water from their small community water systems and fish and swim in their local rivers; reducing air pollution along roadways and neighborhoods; or cleaning up communities to maximize environmental and economic benefits.”

The President’s EPA budget request for climate change and air quality of $1.03 billion, a $41 million increase compared to FY 2014 enacted levels, includes $199.5 million to address what McCarthy called “one of the greatest challenges of this generation and generations to come – climate change.”

The FY 2015 budget provides an additional $10 million and 24 staff at the EPA over and above the base resources that support implementation of the President’s Climate Action Plan.

The Climate Action Plan tasks the EPA with setting carbon dioxide emission standards for power plants and addressing emissions of methane and the family of refrigerants called hydrofluorocarbons, all of which contribute to climate change.

FY 2015 resources will support the development of achievable greenhouse gas standards, regulations, or guidelines for modified, reconstructed, and existing power plants.

Within the EPA budget, a requested $2 million will provide tools for climate change adaptation planning, particularly technical assistance for water utilities at greatest risk from storm surges, and tools for at-risk communities and tribes to help them build resiliency to the effects of climate change.

The budget provides for funding for the states to implement the Clean Air Act by cutting greenhouse gas emissions, yet it also cuts core funding for state and local air pollution control agencies.

The National Association of Clean Air Agencies, NACAA, representing state and local air pollution control agencies in 42 states and 116 metropolitan areas, is both pleased and dismayed by the budget provisions.

NACAA Executive Director Bill Becker said, “NACAA is pleased that the Administration’s FY 2015 budget includes an increase of $15 million in grants to state and local air pollution control agencies under Sections 103/105 of the Clean Air Act. This recognizes the important work that state and local agencies are undertaking to provide clean and healthy air to our citizens.

"As part of these grants, we are very appreciative of the proposed increase of $24.3 million for implementing the President’s Climate Action Plan and related greenhouse gas activities. These are challenging initiatives that will require substantial support,” he said.

"However," said Becker, "we are greatly disappointed that these funding increases come at a significant cost. In particular, the Administration is proposing to cut over $9 million from the 'core' programs of state and local air
pollution control agencies, including much-needed monitoring and emissions inventory activities. These programs are the foundation of our clean air implementation efforts.”

NACAA recommends that the FY 2015 budget include not only the $24.3 million increase for climate activities, but also an additional $35 million for “core clean air implementation programs.”

Funding at EPA will support a nation better prepared for the impacts of climate change, including $10 million for protecting and enhancing coastal wetlands, and $4 million to support urban forest enhancement and protection.

In FY 2015, Heavy Duty Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Phase 2 standards will require that the EPA upgrade the National Vehicle Fuel Emissions Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which is responsible for ensuring vehicles meet national mile per gallon and emissions standards.

And the budget request also supports the President’s call to cut energy waste in homes, businesses, factories and multifamily housing.

**Clean Drinking Water**

The EPA is directing $8 million and 10 staff to advance clean water. This funding allows the agency to continue providing technical expertise for states and tribes as they implement EPA’s guidance for hydraulic fracturing activities. Funding will be used to help states and tribes make sound permitting decisions and review complex data contained in applications for hydraulic fracturing using diesel fuels.

Implementation support will ensure that authorized agencies are effectively managing and overseeing the rapidly growing energy sector while preventing endangerment of underground sources of drinking water.

The FY 2015 request would fund technical assistance for up to 100 communities for cost-effective, sustainable water management and research into new and enhanced technologies for large-scale green infrastructure, as well as agency efforts on chemical prioritization, air toxics, radon, and volatile organic compounds in drinking water.

The EPA budget would fund prevention and reduction of exposure to harmful contaminants, accelerate the pace of cleanups, and reduce environmental impacts associated with land use. More staff for the Brownfields program will maximize clean-up and redevelopment of urban wastelands.

EPA’s budget includes almost $673 million to ensure the safety of chemicals in our daily lives.

This funding covers $23 million and 24 EPA staff who work to implement the President’s August 2013 Executive Order on Chemical Safety. This group seeks to expand coordination, technical support, data system enhancements and information for State Emergency Response Commissions and Local Emergency Planning Committees. The focus is hands-on technical assistance for towns and cities most at risk due to the presence of high risk facilities.

**Support for State and Tribal Partners**
The FY 2015 budget includes a total of $1.13 billion in categorical grants, an increase of $76 million over FY 2014 levels. The State and Tribal Assistance Grants account continues to be the largest percentage of the EPA’s budget request, at nearly 40 percent in FY 2014. It prioritizes funding for state categorical grants to assist states and tribes, the primary implementers of environmental programs.

In FY 2015, $96.4 million is requested for Tribal General Assistance Program grants, representing a nearly $31 million increase over FY 2014.

The EPA is requesting over $1.33 billion to preserve and restore land by developing and implementing prevention programs, improving response capabilities, and maximizing the effectiveness of response and cleanup actions under Superfund and a range of other laws.

This strategy sets as $1.16 billion for Superfund which includes a $43.4 million increase for remedial work and an increase of $9.2 million for Emergency Response and Removal at the nation’s most hazardous sites.

**EPA’s Smaller Footprint**

Since 2006, the EPA has released approximately 428,000 square feet of space at headquarters and facilities nationwide, resulting in a cumulative annual rent avoidance of over $14.6 million. These savings can partially offset the EPA’s rent and security costs.

The FY 2015 request includes $12 million to the support design and engineering of a federally-owned EPA multi-use facility in Las Vegas, Nevada. The new facility will consolidate offices currently in leased locations, create a smaller energy-efficient office and lab footprint, and lower operating costs.

The FY 2015 budget eliminates programs totaling nearly $56 million, including Beaches Protection categorical grants; State Indoor Radon Grants; and Diesel Emissions Reductions Assistance grants.

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