



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Serving the Governors of 19 States and 3 US-Flag Pacific Islands

Water Resources for the West's Future

Policy Resolutions

*Federal Non-Tribal
Fees in General Water
Adjudications*

*Negotiated Indian Water
Rights Settlements*

*Future Management
of Drought in the West*

*Water Quality Issues
in the West*

*The Safe Drinking
Water Act*

*State Authority
Regarding the Federal
Hydropower Licensing*

*Watershed Restoration
through Partnerships*

Background

Westerners have long recognized the vital importance of water. Water is essential to our economy, our natural environment, and our way of life in the West. For many decades, Western Governors have worked together to secure reliable clean water for the region. The Western Governors' Association and its affiliate, the Western States Water Council, have provided a venue for regional coordination, promoted a range of innovative policies and programs to ensure clean and reliable water supplies, and amplified the voice of the Western states with federal agencies and Congress. Over the years, WGA has established itself as a leading expert on water protection and management.

The Challenge

Throughout much of the West, water is a finite and unevenly distributed resource that is nearly fully allocated. Competition is inevitable in meeting water demands from a growing population, industry, energy and agriculture, and in addressing environmental needs. The Western States are expected to see a significant increase in demand for water, in some cases as high as 40 percent by 2030. Add to this an aging water infrastructure and the vagaries of climate, and it becomes clear that states must be smarter in how this precious resource is allocated and managed.

The Strategy

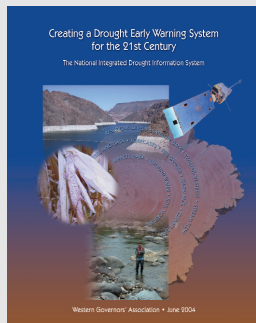
Western Governors are working together to preserve the West's rivers, serve new residents, accommodate economic needs for industry and energy, conserve prime agricultural lands, and assure adequate clean water for future generations. The WGA and WSWC have issued a series of reports titled, *Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future* (2006, 2008, 2010). These reports lay out a comprehensive and proactive agenda for Western water management on a wide range of issues.

The West's rivers, lakes, and aquifers must continue to sustain the region's communities, economies, natural environment and quality of life. This is not an easy task and it will likely require hard trade-offs. The states play a pivotal role in water planning as well as allocating and protecting the resources. WGA will pursue three key and inter-related goals to ensure a sustainable water future for the West.

"Here in the West, we understand that water is more than something that comes out of the tap. It's our lifeblood. Our citizens, our communities and our economy depend on an adequate, reliable supply of water to support our future. And that requires active management, and working together toward meeting our shared goals."

*C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho
WGA Chairman*

Reports



Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps (2008)

Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future (2006)

Creating A Drought Early Warning System for the 21st Century: The National Integrated Drought Information System (2004)

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1. **Providing Better Water Information for Decision**

Makers: Basic data, including information on stream flows, snowpack, and water use, is essential to sound water management now and into the future. WGA is working to enhance basic data collection, for example USGS streamgaging, NRCS's Snowpack Telemetry (SNOTEL), and NASA LANDSAT data. In addition, we are working to provide information that can be used by decision-makers and resource managers, for example through the National Integrated Drought Information System and USGS Water Census.

2. **Making Water Planning Smarter:** Western Governors promote "Integrated Water Resources Planning and Assistance," which encourages comprehensive water supply plans developed under state leadership and seeks to reduce inefficiencies caused by project-specific responses to competing demands, contradictory actions by different jurisdictions, or hastily-conceived reactions to crises. This also entails several water-related regional planning opportunities, including looking at the impacts on water from energy development, changing land use and the region's climate.

3. **Implementing Innovative Solutions:** Western Governors are leading the way towards new water supply and management solutions in three areas: increasing water use efficiency and reuse; facilitating transfers and water sharing with appropriate protections for agriculture; and financing new infrastructure. The goal is to allow states to manage water supplies while helping individual water providers to develop new infrastructure or water supply projects. Examples of this work include the upcoming WGA-WSWC water supply infrastructure conference in November 2010, which will become a semi-annual event; our partnership with the Native American Rights Fund to promote Indian water settlements; and our upcoming report on water supply reuse strategies. Water supply solutions that achieve multiple goals – water supply and the environment being one example – will help ensure that "we make the best use of what we've got" to sustain our communities, economies, and quality of life.

"We face a potential water crisis in the West. It's a combination of increasing demands for a growing population and economy, as well as the uncertainty in supply due to drought and climate change. As a region, we have to become more aggressive and a lot smarter in how we manage this resource."

Brian Schweitzer
Governor of Montana

How We Work

The Western Governors Association works to build strong working partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including federal agencies, local governments, private sector interests, non-governmental organizations and Congress. We recognize that water touches all aspects of our communities and economy and that robust, collaborative solutions are the only sustainable path for the future.



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