



WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

Bill Owens
Governor of Colorado
Chairman

Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
Vice Chair

Pam O. Inmann
Executive Director

Headquarters:
1515 Cleveland Place
Suite 200
Denver, Colorado 80202-5114

303-623-9378
Fax 303-534-7309

Washington, D.C. Office:
400 N. Capitol Street, N.W.
Suite 388
Washington, D.C. 20001

202-624-5402
Fax 202-624-7707
www.westgov.org

May 10, 2005

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Commerce, Justice and Science
S-146A Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Commerce, Justice and Science
SH-123 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Science, State, Justice, and
Commerce, and Related Agencies
H-309 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Science, State, Justice, and
Commerce, and Related Agencies
1016 LHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Senator Mikulski, Chairman Wolf, and
Representative Mollohan:

As you may know, a historic drought in many of our states continues unabated, and the West is struggling to cope with the numerous difficulties associated with the drought. The Administration has also recognized the need to take proactive steps to mitigate the effects of the drought. In fact, the President's budget request for FY 2006 includes \$7.4 million for programs that support the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), including \$4 million for a Water Resources Initiative to support development of a nationwide water resources forecasting capability, and \$3.4 million for Cooperative Observer Network Modernization. The Western Governors support funding for the full implementation of NIDIS.

On June 21, 2004, the Western Governors unanimously adopted a report developed in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) entitled, *Creating a Drought Early Warning System for the 21st Century: The National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)*. As envisioned in the report, NIDIS would coordinate and integrate a variety of observations, analysis techniques and forecasting methods in a system that would support drought assessment and decision-making at the lowest geopolitical level possible. NIDIS is intended to provide water users across the board—farmers, ranchers, utilities, tribes, land managers, business owners, recreationalists, wildlife managers, and decision-makers at all levels of government—with the ability to assess their drought risk in real time and before the onset of drought, in order to make informed decisions that may mitigate a drought's impacts. The report is available online at www.westgov.org.


The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
The Honorable Frank Wolf
The Honorable Alan Mollohan
May 10, 2005
Page 2

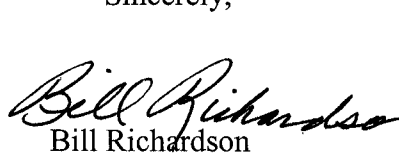
During his January 6, 2005, confirmation hearing, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns stated:


As co-lead governor on drought for the Western Governors' Association, I teamed up with Governor Richardson, of New Mexico, and others, to advocate on a bipartisan basis for an integrated drought monitoring system. By establishing an early warning system, we could better forecast future drought cycles, thereby allowing for better preparation. We extended our partnership to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and an outline of our ideas has been presented to this committee.

We commend the President for including mention of NIDIS in his FY 2006 budget request. We also commend NOAA for including NIDIS in its "Strategic Plan for the U.S. Integrated Earth Observation System." We urge you to follow through on this request by appropriating funds to NOAA for the full implementation of NIDIS. Thank you very much for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,


Mike Rounds
Governor of South Dakota
Lead Governor on Drought


Bill Richardson
Governor of New Mexico
Lead Governor on Drought


Brian Schweitzer
Governor of Montana
Lead Governor on Drought

cc: The Honorable Mike Johanns, USDA Secretary
The Honorable Conrad Lautenbacher, NOAA Administrator