

POSITION STATEMENT
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
in support of
THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
WATER CONSERVATION, EFFICIENCY AND MANAGEMENT ACT

Sioux Falls, South Dakota
May 4, 2007

WHEREAS, the Administration has requested legislation to specifically authorize a program of cost-shared grants to non-Federal entities, including States, for projects to conserve water, increase water use efficiency, facilitate water markets, enhance water management, or implement other actions to prevent water-related crises or conflicts in watersheds that have a nexus to Federal water projects within Reclamation States; and

WHEREAS, the Western States Water Council and its member States have long supported appropriately designed water conservation projects and programs, and entities within Council-member States have cooperated with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to encourage water conservation; and

WHEREAS, Reclamation has adopted an approach to promoting water conservation that appropriately focuses on the development of incentive-based programs of technical and financial assistance in lieu of mandatory regulations and top-down, command-and-control approaches to water conservation; and

WHEREAS, Reclamation's Water 2025 Initiative and Challenge Grants encourage the efficient use of water on federal water projects and, in cooperation with States and other entities, provide a non-regulatory, incentive-based approach to assisting water districts, in accordance with state law, develop and implement effective water conservation plans and programs;

WHEREAS, the Western Governors' Association's June 2006 report, "Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future," specifically refers to the need to explore the relative merits of water conservation and water use efficiency (demand management), and "optimize appropriate opportunities to ensure that adequate supplies of suitable quality are available to sustain the growth and prosperity of western states;"

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Western States Water Council supports legislation to specifically authorize such activities and Reclamation's commitment to a proactive, but non-regulatory, approach to encouraging water conservation -- with further state and local input -- through voluntary federal-state-local partnerships, as an appropriate long-term role for Reclamation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Western States Water Council urge the Bureau of Reclamation to provide meaningful opportunities for state, local and tribal water agencies to participate in the development of eligibility criteria and priorities for Water 2025 Challenge Grants, and other similar activities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Water 2025 Program is complementary to Reclamation's Water Conservation Field Services Program and in no way nullifies the need for that program.