



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Web Page: [www.westgov.org/wswc](http://www.westgov.org/wswc)

Position No. 279

July 31, 2006

The Honorable Ted Stevens, Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Western States Water Council represents eighteen states from Alaska to Texas and California to North Dakota. I am writing on behalf of the Council to express our strong collective support for S. 2751, introduced by Senator Ben Nelson and H.R. 5136, introduced by Rep. Ralph Hall, now on the House Union Calendar. Both bills strengthen the drought monitoring and forecasting capabilities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and create a National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). The system is intended to build on existing federal water data gathering and weather forecasting and monitoring programs, and to integrate to the extent practicable federal research in support of an early drought warning system, as well as preparedness and mitigation tools and techniques. We would urge your support for prompt action to enact this legislation in this session of Congress. Also, attached is our position in support of a National Drought Preparedness Act.

We would also like to stress at this time the importance of various federal data gathering programs that are the basis for water resources planning and management at all levels of government for projecting drought, floods and other weather-related events. Specifically, the Council and its member states and state and local agencies work closely with USDA's National Water and Climate Center on snow survey and water supply forecasting, utilize the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Water and National Streamflow Information Programs, and increasingly use thermal band data gathered by LANDSAT remote sensing capabilities to monitor water use and related evapotranspiration. These and many other existing programs are vital to future water resources management and need adequate federal funding, despite other federal budget priorities. NIDIS is a step forward that will help provide a means for greater collaboration between NOAA and other federal, state and local agencies (and identify gaps in existing information) that will have water management benefits far beyond just drought prediction, preparedness and mitigation.

We would very much appreciate your support and assistance in enacting this legislation, and in providing funding for federal water resources data gathering, management and distribution activities that help provide a sound scientific basis for critical water-related decisionmaking for the benefit of the West and the Nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duane A. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Duane A. Smith, Chairman  
Western States Water Council