



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

Creekview Plaza, Suite A-201 / 942 East 7145 South / Midvale, Utah 84047 / (801) 561-5300 / FAX (801) 255-9642

Web Page: www.westgov.org/wswc

Position No. 288

May 11, 2007

Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
SD-364 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Pete Domenici, Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
SD-312 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Western States Water Council, which represents eighteen states, I am writing to express our appreciation for your efforts in the last Congress in securing passage of S. 895, the Rural Water Supply Act of 2006. Much of the West is characterized by its aridity, and the continuing drought highlights the fact that water availability is an ever present constraint defining our economic and environmental well being and quality of life. This is particularly true in many small rural communities.

The Western Governors' Association's June 2006 report, "Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future," specifically endorsed the legislation and referred to the need to assess rural water supply needs and authorize federal loan guarantees...to better enable non-federal project sponsors to obtain private financing for reimbursable extraordinary operation and maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement costs."

We look forward to working with the Bureau of Reclamation, under your Committee's oversight, to review the status of rural water supply projects and the demand for new projects, as well as to develop guidelines and criteria for determining program eligibility and establishing project priorities. As the legislation specifically states, it is important that Reclamation "...consult and cooperate with appropriate Federal, State, tribal, regional, and local authorities" as it conducts appraisal investigations and feasibility studies, prepares feasibility reports, and identifies funding sources.

Moreover, again as recognized in the legislation, the program must be coordinated with "...existing federal and State rural water and wastewater programs to facilitate the most efficient and effective solution to meeting the water needs of the non-Federal project sponsors." Further, we appreciate the recognition that compliance with State water laws and interstate compacts is vital. Upgrading and replacing inadequate rural water systems may require finding new water supplies, which will entail acquiring necessary state water rights.

Position No. 288

Again, we applaud your efforts to address these problems and look forward to working together to fund and implement the program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Duane A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chairman
Western States Water Council