

**POSITION  
of the  
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL  
regarding  
FEDERAL WATER AND CLIMATE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROGRAMS  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
October 16, 2009**

**WHEREAS**, the Western States Water Council is a policy advisory body representing eighteen states, and has long been involved in western water conservation, development, protection, and management issues, and the member states and political subdivisions have long been partners in cooperative federal water and climate data collection and analysis programs; and

**WHEREAS**, in the West, water is a critical, vital resource (much of which originates from mountain snows) and sound decision making demands accurate and timely data on precipitation, temperature, soil moisture, snow depth, snow water content, streamflow, groundwater and similar information; and

**WHEREAS**, the demands for water and related climate data continue to increase along with our population, and this information is used by federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies, as well as private entities and individuals to: (1) forecast flooding, drought and climate change impacts; (2) project future water supplies for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses; (3) estimate streamflows for hydropower production, recreation, and environmental purposes, such as for fish and wildlife management, including endangered species needs; and (4) facilitate water management and administration of water rights, decrees and interstate compacts; and

**WHEREAS**, without timely and accurate information, human life, health, welfare, property, and environmental and natural resources are at considerably greater risk of loss; and

**WHEREAS**, critical and vital information is gathered and disseminated through a number of important federal programs including, but not limited to: (1) the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, administered by the National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) in Portland, Oregon, and funded through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); (2) NWCC's Soil and Climate Analysis Network (SCAN); (3) the U.S. Geological Survey's Cooperative Streamgaging Program and National Stream Flow Information Program, which are funded through the Department of Interior; (4) Landsat thermal data acquired through the National Atmospheric and Space Administration (NASA) and USGS; (5) USGS ground water measurement and monitoring; and (6) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service and Climate Programs Office; and

**WHEREAS**, state-of-the-art technology has been developed to provide real or near real-time data with the potential to vastly improve the water-related information available to decisionmakers in natural resources and emergency management, and thus better protect the public safety, welfare and the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, over a number of years, federal appropriations have not kept up with increasing needs, program costs and/or capital replacement requirements, as well as matching non-federal contributions, and this erosion in funding has led to the discontinuance, disrepair, or obsolescence of vital equipment needed to maintain existing water resources related data gathering activities; and

**WHEREAS**, a substantial increase in related federal program appropriations is required to avoid the loss of critical information and data, and to address new emerging needs; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a serious need for adequate and consistent federal funding to maintain, restore, modernize, and provide for the targeted expansion of federal programs with a primary focus on coordinated data collection and dissemination.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Western States Water Council urge the Administration and the Congress to give a high priority to the allocation and appropriation of sufficient funds for these critical, vital programs which benefit so many, yet have been or are being allowed to erode to the point that it threatens the quantity and quality of basic data provided to a myriad, growing and diffuse number of decision makers and stakeholders, with significantly adverse consequences.