

RESOLUTION
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
Regarding
NATIONAL WATER POLICY VISION
August 13, 2009*

WHEREAS, the Western States Water Council has long recognized the importance of protecting and wisely managing our national water resources for the benefit of our present and future generations, including our environment; and

WHEREAS, different entities are currently evaluating the need for a national water vision and new federal legislation to advance water resources planning and management at all levels; and

WHEREAS, States and their political subdivisions have primary responsibility for planning and managing our nation's water resources, both surface and ground water, quantity and quality, as well as allocating and administering rights to the use of water for myriad uses; and

WHEREAS, States are in the best position to identify, evaluate and prioritize their needs; and

WHEREAS, the focus should be on a grassroots, small watershed approach to identifying water problems and potential solutions from the ground up, integrating these efforts into individual state plans; and

WHEREAS, regional or multi-state and multiple river basin strategic plans – as well as any national water plan, vision or planning process – should be comprised of these building blocks; and

WHEREAS, it is paramount to move state and local government participation back into the process of federal decisionmaking, before too much momentum has been built toward federal policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, the federal government should support States by providing a rational federal regulatory framework, together with technical and appropriate financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, developing optimal solutions to our water-related challenges will require an integrated approach and greater partnerships among state, local, tribal and federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the above approach should consider all needs together, develop effective solutions which are complementary rather than conflicting, and provide direction for selecting the most appropriate governmental entities or organizations for implementing solutions; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive plans developed under state or tribal leadership with federal assistance should (a) reduce inefficiencies caused by project-specific responses to competing demands, (b) reduce contradictory actions by multiple state, local and federal agencies, and (c) minimize hastily conceived reactions to the latest real or perceived crisis; and

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WHEREAS, Federal agencies should use state water plans (a) to help determine national water policy and priorities that best align federal agency support to states, (b) to inform decision making regarding regional water issues, and (c) to coordinate investment in water infrastructure;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that any National Water Policy vision, plan or planning process must recognize, defer to and support State, tribal and local government water plans and planning processes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any federal legislation should explicitly recognize and provide support for ongoing watershed efforts in and between the states, tribes and local entities and closely consult with the states in the implementation of any new federal program(s); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress should direct federal water resource agencies to include integrated water resources management, planning and assistance as one of their primary missions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administration and Congress should look at the WSWC/WestFAST partnership as a model for a better way to focus federal support on state priorities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any federal legislation should avoid strategies that increase mandates on state, tribal and local governments; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that nothing in any act of Congress should be construed as affecting or intending to affect or in any way to interfere with the laws of the respective States relating to: (a) water or watershed planning; (b) the control, appropriation, use, or distribution of water used in irrigation or for municipal or any other purposes, or any vested right acquired therein; or (c) intending to affect or in any way to interfere with any interstate compact, decree or negotiated water rights agreement.

*Adopted by the Executive Committee via conference call.