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March 23, 2021

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Water and Environment  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
House of Representatives  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Rouzer  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water and Environment  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
House of Representatives  
2164 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Napolitano and Ranking Member Rouzer:

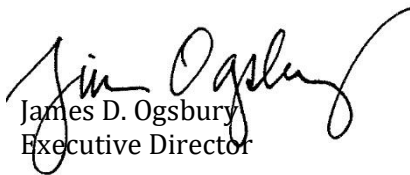
In advance of the Subcommittee's March 23, 2021, hearing on "The Water Resources Development Act of 2020: Status of Essential Provisions," attached please find three Western Governors' Association (WGA) policy resolutions that address provisions contained in the Act:

- WGA Policy Resolution 2019-06, Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management;
- WGA Policy Resolution 2018-12, Water Quality in the West; and
- WGA Policy Resolution 2018-08, Water Resource Management in the West.

Western Governors appreciate your oversight of this important legislation, which helps support water infrastructure construction and maintenance, as well as invasive species management, across the West.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require further information. In the meantime, with warm regards and best wishes, I am

Respectfully,



James D. Ogsbury  
Executive Director

Attachments



## Policy Resolution 2019-06

### Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management

#### A. BACKGROUND

1. Per Executive Order 13751, “invasive species” means “with regard to a particular ecosystem, a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human, animal, or plant health.” This definition can include aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals, forest and agricultural pests, and pathogens.
2. The 2017-2027 Hawai'i Interagency Biosecurity Plan defines biosecurity as “the set of measures taken to manage the risk from invasive species to the economy, environment, and health and lifestyle of the people.” This includes pre-border measures, border measures, post-border measures, and measures that increase public awareness about invasive species.
3. The Plant Protection Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106–224) defines “biological control” (biocontrol) as the use of biological control organisms as an “enemy, antagonist, or competitor used to control a plant pest or noxious weed.” When used properly, biocontrol can be an effective tool in efforts to manage and eradicate invasive species.
4. States have different definitions of biosecurity, biological control and invasive species. They also may use regulatory and nonregulatory terms that are related to, but not synonymous with, the term invasive species, including pest, nuisance species, noxious weed, and injurious wildlife.
5. Invasive species have substantial negative effects on ecosystems, economies, and communities in the West. Studies have found that invasive species cost the U.S. more than \$120 billion every year, and the National Wildlife Federation estimates that 42 percent of threatened or endangered species are at risk due to invasive species. Invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass, medusahead, fountain grass, and ventenata pose a major threat to western rangelands by increasing the risk of wildfire, outcompeting native grasses, and diminishing soil and water quality. Aquatic nuisance species, including invasive quagga and zebra mussels, decrease water quantity and quality, impair native wildlife, harm hydroelectric and irrigation systems, and can impede maritime transport by fouling vessel hulls. Invasive pathogens affect human health and welfare, and invasive species, such as mosquitoes, can vector human diseases. Invasive species damage multiple types of environments, from virgin forests to urban tree canopies. Invasive species harm a wide variety of economies dependent on natural resources, including agriculture, ranching, tourism, energy production and transmission, and forest products. Invasive species threaten many native plants central to western life and the cultures of Native Americans, Native Hawai'ians, Alaska Natives, and other indigenous peoples.

6. The spread of invasive species results from a combination of human activities, susceptibility of invaded environments, climate change, biology of the invading species, and dispersal. These characteristics are not dictated by geopolitical boundaries, but rather by ecosystem-level factors, which cross state and national borders. Scientists, private landowners, and state and federal land managers across the West have expressed the need to develop a more aggressive and cohesive strategy for invasive species management that includes prevention, monitoring, control, and eradication.
7. The impacts of invasive species on natural resources and human health and welfare are similar in scope and intensity to the threats posed by wildfire. Wildfire management on federal, state, tribal, and local land is coordinated through a sophisticated planning and response network, which includes the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC).
8. Many invasive species were introduced, or their distribution was expanded, due to inadequate federal and state regulations dealing with interstate transport, international trade and interstate commerce, and a lack of communication and coordination between land management agencies.
9. Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) is a coordinated set of actions to find and eradicate potential invasive species in a specific location before they spread and cause harm. The Incident Command System (ICS) is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management, including invasive species rapid response, by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
10. In the West, biosecurity and invasive species management is the responsibility of a wide network of state, federal, and local agencies. Federal agencies manage invasive species on federal lands and waters under a complex system of mandates and authorities.
11. Cooperative agreements, grants, and procurement contracts between federal agencies and state and local invasive species management authorities are effective in establishing structured partnerships for collaborative invasive species management. The use of cooperative agreements lessens the burden on local federal land managers, while increasing the efficiency of invasive species management programs utilizing local collaborative goal setting. Additionally, cooperative agreements simplify project-based contracting utilizing the authorities of state and local government agencies. This can be extremely useful, especially where infestations extend across multiple landownerships or EDRR is the management objective.
12. Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) allows states to enter into agreements with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permitting them to perform various land management activities on federal lands. These tools have been successfully used by forest and rangeland managers to achieve various land management objectives across federal, state and local government, and privately-owned lands
13. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulation of interstate movement of commodities via airlines is focused on the protection of agricultural industries in the contiguous United States. This is particularly evident in Hawai'i, where baggage destined for the U.S. mainland is subject to federal inspection, while baggage moving from the mainland to Hawai'i is not.

14. Environmental DNA (eDNA) is DNA present in an environmental sample, as differentiated from traditional sampling of DNA directly from an intact organism. eDNA frequently is thought of as DNA in tissue and cells that have been shed by an organism but can also refer to DNA within an intact organism, if that organism is collected in the environmental sample. eDNA can be used to detect a wide range of organisms, including those that are endangered or invasive, and be used for both research and monitoring purposes.
15. The West includes a number of highly important seaports on the U.S. mainland and across the Pacific region. Maritime vessels represent a primary pathway for the movement of aquatic invasive species. With the passage of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act in 2018, regulations regarding ballast water and other discharges are centralized under Section 312 of the Clean Water Act with the Environmental Protection Agency setting environmental standards, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) setting vessel requirements to meet those standards, and the USCG and interested states enforcing those requirements.
16. State invasive species councils and invasive plant councils provide policy level direction, planning, and coordination for state-level biosecurity and invasive species prevention and management actions in the West. Councils are led by state agencies, non-profit organizations, industry, private landowners, and public-private partnerships. These groups empower those engaged in the prevention, detection, and eradication of invasive species, and serve as forums for invasive species education, communication, and strategic planning. Invasive species councils can collaborate on regional-level issues and benefit from mechanisms that help them to coordinate and solve cross-boundary, cross-jurisdictional challenges.

**B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Western Governors support the creation of a Western Invasive Species Council (WISC) to help enhance coordination between existing state invasive species councils, improve communication and collaboration on regional biosecurity and invasive species control efforts, and to advocate for regional needs at the federal level. The WISC should be initially coordinated through the Western Governors' Association and should work to address cross-boundary and cross-jurisdictional challenges identified in this resolution.
2. Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration to support state, territorial, and tribal invasive species prevention, control and management programs and redouble efforts on federal lands. This should be accomplished through accountability and oversight of programs administered by the USDA, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Defense, the USCG, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These programs provide valuable services in the detection and elimination of invasive species, as well as coordination, public outreach, and communication.
3. Western Governors support research as needed to provide understanding of invasive species life potential range distribution, and to develop geographically-appropriate control measures. Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration to support much-needed research on biosecurity and invasive species, including programs under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and to facilitate funding mechanisms that enable land grant universities to conduct research and development of new pesticides. Institutions conducting research on biosecurity, biocontrol and invasive species control methods should look for opportunities to pool funding resources and exchange information across

administrative lines. Invasive species managers and policymakers should be encouraged to develop new decision-making tools and economic analyses, as well as build and improve upon the decision-making tools and analyses currently in use. Invasive species managers should strive to incorporate economic analyses and regional-level, science-based decision-making tools into management decisions.

4. Western Governors strongly encourage expansion and creation of partnerships – such as invasive species councils with representation from local weed and pest districts, conservation districts, county governments, non-profit and industry organizations, local stakeholders, state, island, tribal, federal, regional and international agencies – committed to preventing the spread of invasive species, averting new unauthorized introductions, responding rapidly to new introductions, and working together to find creative regional approaches for protecting and restoring natural, agriculture, power and water conveyance infrastructure, and recreational resources. Federal agencies should build a more sophisticated and centralized biosecurity and invasive species management network, including a National Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management Center based on the model of the NIFC.
5. Congress and the federal government should ensure that invasive species funding, including support for emergency response, is sustainable, flexible and able to be maximized by federal, state and local agencies with pooled resources and collaborative funding mechanisms. Federal funding, cooperative agreements grants, and procurement contracts for state and local biosecurity and invasive species management should be structured in a deliberate and transparent way that allows for the greatest amount of flexibility and long-term planning. When possible, federal agencies should look for collaborative projects and funding opportunities that multiply state resources and support state-led biosecurity and invasive species management projects.
6. Western Governors call upon Congress to promote state-directed programs to combat invasive species. Regional leadership and state-directed programs provide place-based solutions tailored to unique regional or local conditions in land and aquatic ecosystems. The federal role should be one of partnership and policy-making that strengthen states' on-the-ground efforts and mitigates risks associated with the movement of invasive species between states.
7. Federal agencies are encouraged to expand the use of cooperative agreements with state and local governments and should ensure that they are approved in a timely manner and in collaboration with implementing state agencies. Federal agencies can also support invasive species management efforts by encouraging contract recipients to coordinate with state and local invasive species management agencies, regulatory programs, and cooperative weed and invasive species management areas. State invasive species managers should consider using Good Neighbor Authority on USFS and BLM lands for cross-boundary collaborative invasive species control, management and eradication programs.
8. Federal actions should support state biosecurity and invasive species management efforts by ensuring the timely approval of state permits for biosecurity, quarantine, biocontrol, and rapid response actions. Federal agencies should consult with Governors early and substantively regarding biosecurity or invasive species management decisions that affect state resources and state actions.

9. Federal agencies should identify individuals within district and region offices that can be contacted and assist in the planning and implementation of local cross-boundary invasive species management programs.
10. The threats that invasive species pose to western landscapes and communities are serious and should be met with a sophisticated and coordinated response commensurate with the level of their impacts.
11. Prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective method of invasive species management. Effective biosecurity, prevention, and containment methods can mitigate the need for more expensive and burdensome control and eradication programs. Prevention strategies should be coordinated across state, national, and international lines. Federal and state agencies should increase the use of innovative biosecurity prevention and detection programs, including increased use of electronic manifesting in interstate shipments for the purposes of inspection, and the use of canine detection resources.
12. Western Governors support the EDRR framework as a method to limit or eliminate new introductions and existing species expansion. Programs for the control and/or eradication of invasive species must result in more on-the-ground prevention, management and eradication. The ICS should be evaluated for use in instances of fast-spreading invasives and used as part of EDRR; state, federal, and local agencies can opt to practice and implement the ICS as part of rapid response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency can support these efforts by working with western states to create an ICS training module for invasive species rapid response. The Executive Branch can support state-led rapid response programs by: 1) increasing federal funding for state-led aquatic invasive species rapid response programs, including those that provide mechanisms for flexible, long-term support of state early detection rapid response efforts; 2) streamlining federal permitting and approval processes for treatment and management actions for new mussel detections; 3) creating a single federal authority for aquatic invasive species treatment permitting and approval in freshwater systems; and 4) simplifying reporting on new invasive mussel infestations by creating a single federal point of contact for new mussel detections.
13. Federal agencies should support states' effort to identify, study and approve the use of biological control organisms. Federal permitting models should be structured to ensure biocontrol can be utilized by states in a safe and timely manner. Biocontrol research is encouraged at a regional level, with biocontrol research information being encouraged to move freely between institutions and across state lines. Invasive species managers in the West would benefit from the creation of a new, state-of-the-art biological control facility, as well as a collaborative, multi-agency plan for maintaining and staffing new biocontrol facilities at a level that more adequately meets the expanding needs of the region. Furthermore, effective biocontrol, biosecurity, and invasive species research depends upon a highly-skilled workforce. State and federal agencies should collaborate with universities to support programs essential to biosecurity and invasive species management, such as botany, zoology, plant pathology, taxonomy, systematics, and related fields.
14. The containment of invasive quagga and zebra mussels at infested waters in the West depends upon the collaboration and mutual effort of federal, state and local agencies. Many state-led containment programs benefit from federal cooperation and funding, and state and federal agencies should be encouraged to sustain and expand these effective partnerships as necessary. However, to adequately protect the West from the movement of

aquatic invasive species, federal agencies must be able to act as full partners in invasive species containment efforts and must have the funding and authorities necessary to contain invasive species within lands and waters under their jurisdiction. To this end, federal agencies, including the National Park Service and BLM, should be vested with clear authority to manage watercraft upon their departure from infested waterbodies under federal jurisdiction.

15. Integrated pest management, biocontrol, outcome-based grazing, and targeted grazing can be effective tools to control the spread of invasive annual grasses. Federal, state, and local agencies should view invasive annual grasses as a regional threat and strive to identify and implement cross-boundary projects to control invasive annual grasses at a regional level. Such projects should include those utilizing alternative management techniques such as outcome-based grazing.
16. Agricultural industries in the Pacific Islands need to be similarly protected from the risk of interstate movement of invasive species as the contiguous U.S. mainland. USDA quarantines and commodity inspections should incorporate the priorities of the West, including non-contiguous states and territorial islands in the western region. This includes maintaining federal quarantines on pests that have not yet reached the West, like the emerald ash borer, and adopting policies that adequately protect Pacific states and territories, such as inspection of baggage moving from the contiguous U.S. to non-contiguous areas.
17. State, federal and local agencies and regional coordinating groups should develop and implement a set of best practices for conducting eDNA monitoring and incorporating positive detection results into rapid response strategies.
18. To effectively prevent, contain, and control invasive species, federal, state and local invasive species managers need federal laws that support on-the-ground action. Western Governors support a states-led review of federal biosecurity and invasive species statutes, including the Lacey Act and the National Invasive Species Act, to evaluate how they support on-the-ground management, identify any gaps in their application, and ensure that their structure and implementation are able to address 21<sup>st</sup> century biosecurity and invasive species challenges. Of particular interest are opportunities to expand the taxonomic scope of the Lacey Act to benefit U.S. biosecurity.
19. As directed by the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency should consult with Western Governors and work closely and collaboratively with states on the implementation of that act to ensure that state and regional aquatic resource protection needs are met across the West and the Pacific. Federal and state partners should collaborate on the development of evidence-based risk assessments and should work together to assess the efficacy of policies and tools that may be used in mitigating the impact of various types of discharges, including hull biofouling. Western Governors believe that protecting the diversity of marine habitats in western states and Pacific territories is best accomplished by working with states that have the greatest knowledge of their ecosystems and invasive risks.
20. Accurate, standardized, and accessible geospatial data is essential to biosecurity and invasive species management in the West. Western Governors support efforts to standardize and centralize invasive species occurrence data, streamline the exchange of

data between the nation's major invasive species data aggregators, and increase the accessibility of data to federal, state, and local land and resource managers.

**C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE**

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

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## Policy Resolution 2018-12

### Water Quality in the West

#### A. **BACKGROUND**

1. Clean water is essential to strong economies and quality of life. In most of the West, water is a scarce resource that must be managed with sensitivity to social, environmental, and economic values and needs. Because of their unique understanding of these needs, states are in the best position to manage the water within their borders.
2. States have federally-recognized authority to manage and allocate water within their boundaries. The Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 101(g) expressly says that “the authority of each state to allocate quantities of water within its jurisdiction shall not be superseded, abrogated, or otherwise impaired by this Act.”
3. States and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) work together as co-regulators under the CWA and the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Congress has delegated to states, by statute, the authority to obtain approval to implement certain federal program responsibilities. When a state has been approved to implement a program and the state is meeting minimum program requirements, the role of federal agencies like EPA should be funding, technical assistance, and research support. States should be free to develop, implement, and enforce those requirements using an approach that makes sense in their specific jurisdiction, subject to the minimum requirements of the federal acts.
4. The CWA was last reauthorized in 1987; attempts to reauthorize the Act since then have failed. Current federal regulations, guidance, and programs pertaining to the CWA do not always recognize the specific conditions and needs of most of the West, where water is scarce and even wastewater becomes a valuable resource to both humans and the environment. The West includes a variety of waters; small ephemeral washes, large perennial rivers, effluent-dependent streams, and wild and scenic rivers. In addition to natural rivers, streams and lakes, there are numerous man-made reservoirs, waterways and water conveyance structures. States need more flexibility to determine how to best manage these varying resources.

#### B. **GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT**

##### **Clean Water Act (CWA)**

1. **State Authority and Implementation of CWA:** States have jurisdiction over water resource allocation decisions and are responsible for how to balance state water resource needs within CWA objectives. New regulations, rulemaking, and guidance should recognize this state authority.
  - a) **CWA Jurisdiction:** Western Governors urge EPA and the Corps to engage the states as co-regulators and ensure that state water managers have a robust and meaningful voice in the development of any rule regarding CWA jurisdiction, particularly in the early stages of development before irreversible momentum precludes effective state participation.

- b) **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)/Adaptive Management:** States should have the flexibility to adopt water quality standards and set total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) that are tailored to the specific characteristics of Western water bodies, including variances for unique state and local conditions.
  - c) **Anti-degradation:** CWA Section 303 gives states the primary responsibility to establish water quality standards (WQS) subject to EPA oversight. Given the states' primary role in establishing WQS, EPA should directly involve the states in the rulemaking process for any proposed changes to its existing regulations. Before imposing new anti-degradation policies or implementation requirements, EPA should document the need for new requirements and strive to ensure that new requirements do not interfere with sound existing practices.
  - d) **Groundwater:** States have exclusive authority over the allocation and administration of rights to use groundwater located within their borders and are primarily responsible for allocating, protecting, managing, and otherwise controlling the resource. The regulatory reach of the CWA was not intended to, and should not, be applied to the management and protection of groundwater resources. The federal government should not develop a groundwater quality strategy; instead, it must recognize and respect state primacy, reflect a true state-federal partnership, and comply with current federal statutory authorities.
2. **Permitting:** Actions taken by EPA in its CWA permitting processes should not impinge upon state authority over water management or the states' responsibility to implement CWA provisions.
- a) **State Water Quality Certification:** Section 401 of the CWA requires applicants for a federal license to secure state certification that potential discharges from their activities will not violate state water quality standards. Section 401 is operating as it should, and states' mandatory conditioning authority should be retained without amendment.
  - b) **General Permits:** Reauthorization of the CWA must reconcile the continuing administrative need for general permits with their site-specific permitting requirements under the CWA. EPA should promulgate rules and guidance that better support the use of general permits where it is more effective to permit groups of dischargers rather than individual dischargers.
  - c) **Water Transfers:** Water transfers that do not involve the addition of a pollutant have not been subject to the permitting requirements of the CWA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). States already have authority to address the water quality issues associated with transfers. Western Governors believe that transporting water through constructed conveyances to supply beneficial uses should not trigger NPDES permit requirements simply because the source and receiving water contain different chemical concentrations and physical constituents. Western Governors support EPA's current Water Transfers Rule, which exempts water transfers between waters of the United States from NPDES permitting requirements.
  - d) **Pesticides:** Western Governors generally support the primary role of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) in regulating agriculture and public

health related pesticide applications to waters of the U.S. and will seek state-based solutions that complement rather than duplicate FIFRA in protecting water supplies.

3. **Nonpoint Source Pollution:** Nonpoint source pollution requires state watershed-oriented water quality management plans, and federal agencies should collaborate with states to carry out the objectives of these plans. The CWA should not supersede other ongoing federal, state, and local nonpoint source programs. Federal water policies must recognize that state programs enhanced by federal efforts could provide a firm foundation for a national nonpoint source policy that maintains the non-regulatory and voluntary nature of the program. In general, the use of point source solutions to control nonpoint source pollution is also ill-advised.

a) **Forest Roads:** Stormwater runoff from forest roads has been managed as a nonpoint source of pollution under EPA regulation and state law since enactment of the CWA. Western Governors support solutions that are consistent with the long-established treatment of forest roads as nonpoint sources, provided that forest roads are treated equally across ownership within each state.

b) **Nutrient Pollution:** Nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrient) pollution is a significant cause of water quality impairment across the nation, and continued cooperation between states and EPA is needed. However, nutrients produced by non-point sources fall outside of NPDES jurisdiction and should not be treated like other pollutants that have clear and consistent thresholds over a broad range of aquatic systems and conditions.

States should be allowed sufficient flexibility to utilize their own incentives and authorities to establish standards and control strategies to address nutrient pollution, rather than being forced to abide by one-size-fits-all federal numeric criteria. Successful tools currently in use by states include best management practices, nutrient trading, controlling other water quality parameters, and other innovative approaches.

4. **CWA Reauthorization:** The Western Governors support reauthorization of the CWA, provided that it recognizes the unique hydrology and legal framework in Western states. Further, any CWA reauthorization should include a new statement of purpose to encourage the reuse of treated wastewater to reduce water pollution and efficiently manage water resources.

5. **Good Samaritan Legislation:** Congress should enact a program to protect volunteering remediating parties who conduct authorized remediation of abandoned hardrock mines from becoming legally responsible under the CWA and/or the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act for any continuing discharges after completion of a remediation project, provided that the remediating party – or “Good Samaritan” – does not otherwise have liability for that abandoned mine or inactive mine site.

6. **Stormwater (Wet Weather) Pollution:** In the West, stormwater discharges to ephemeral streams in arid regions pose substantially different environmental risks than do the same discharges to perennial surface waters. The Western Governors emphasize the importance of state primacy in water management, including management of ephemeral streams. State water agencies are well-equipped to provide tailored approaches that reflect the unique management needs of ephemeral streams.

7. **State-Tribal Coordination:** Western Governors endorse government-to-government cooperation among the states, tribes and EPA in support of effective and consistent CWA implementation. While retaining the ability of the Governors to take a leadership role in coordination with the tribes, EPA should promote effective consultation, coordination, and dispute resolution among the governments, with emphasis on lands where tribes have treatment-as-state status under Section 518 of the CWA.

### **Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)**

8. **Federal Assistance in Meeting SDWA Standards:** Western Governors believe that the SDWA and its standards for drinking water contaminants have been instrumental in ensuring safe drinking water supplies for the nation. It is essential that the federal government, through EPA, provide adequate support to the states and water systems to meet federal requirements. Assistance is particularly needed for small and rural systems, which often lack the resources needed to comply with federal treatment standards.
9. **Drinking Water Standards:** Contaminants such as arsenic, chromium, perchlorate, and fluoride often occur naturally in the West. Western Governors support EPA technical assistance and research to improve both the efficiency and affordability of treatment technologies for these contaminants. In any drinking water standards that the EPA may revise or propose for these and other contaminants, including disinfection byproducts, EPA should consider the disproportionate impact that such standards may have on Western states and give special consideration to feasible technology based on the resources and needs of smaller water systems.
10. **Risk Assessments:** Analysis of the costs of treatment for drinking water contaminants should carefully determine the total costs of capital improvements, operation, and maintenance when determining feasible technology that can be applied by small systems. These costs should be balanced against the anticipated human health benefits before implementing or revising drinking water standards.
11. **Emerging Contaminants/Pharmaceuticals:** The possible health and environmental impacts of emerging contaminants and pharmaceuticals are of concern to Western Governors. Although states have existing authorities to address possible risks associated with emerging contaminants and pharmaceuticals, there is a need for more reliable science showing impacts on human health as more information regarding these contaminants becomes available.
12. **Hydraulic Fracturing:** States currently employ a range of effective programmatic elements and regulations to ensure that hydraulic fracturing does not impair water quality, including but not limited to requirements pertaining to well permitting, well construction, the handling of exploration and production waste fluids, the closure of wells, and the abandonment of well sites.

Federal efforts to study the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on water quality should leverage state knowledge, expertise, policies, and regulations. Such efforts should also be limited in scope, based upon sound science, and driven by the states. Western Governors oppose efforts that would diminish the primary and exclusive authority of states over the allocation of water resources necessary for hydraulic fracturing.

## **Compliance with Federal Water Quality and Drinking Water Requirements**

13. **State Revolving Funds:** Western Governors support EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) and Drinking Water SRF as important tools that help states and local communities address related water infrastructure needs and comply with federal water quality and drinking water requirements. Western Governors also urge Congress and the Administration to ensure that the SRF Programs provide greater flexibility and fewer restrictions on state SRF management.
14. **Restoring and Maintaining Lakes and Healthy Watersheds:** Historically, the Section 314 Clean Lakes Program and the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program provided states with critical tools to restore and maintain water quality in lakes and watersheds. Western Governors urge the Administration and Congress to support these programs. Such support should not come at the expense of other federal watershed protection programs.
15. **EPA Support and Technical Assistance:** The federal government, through EPA, should provide states and local entities with adequate support and technical assistance to help them comply with federal water quality and drinking water requirements. EPA should also collaborate with and allow states to identify and establish priority areas, timelines, and focus on programs that provide the largest public health and environmental benefits.
16. **EPA Grant Funding for Primary Service - Rural Water Programs:** Some rural communities still lack basic water and sanitary services needed to assure safe, secure sources of water for drinking and other domestic needs. Adequate federal support, including but not limited to the Rural Utilities Service programs of the Department of Agriculture and SRFs through EPA, are necessary to augment state resources.

## **Water Quality Monitoring and Data Collection**

17. **Water Data Needs:** Western water management is highly dependent upon the availability of data regarding both the quality and quantity of surface and ground waters. EPA should provide support to the states in developing innovative monitoring and assessment methods, including making use of biological assessments, sensors and remote sensing, as well as demonstrating the value to the states of the national probabilistic aquatic resource surveys.

## **B. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE**

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

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## Policy Resolution 2018-08

### Water Resource Management in the West

#### A. BACKGROUND

1. Water is a crucial resource for communities, industries, habitats, farms, and western states. Clean, reliable water supplies are essential to maintain and improve quality of life. The scarce nature of water in much of the West makes it particularly important to our states.
2. States are the primary authority for allocating, administering, protecting, and developing water resources, and they are primarily responsible for water supply planning within their boundaries. States have the ultimate say in the management of their water resources and are best suited to speak to the unique nature of western water law and hydrology.
3. Many communities in the West anticipate challenges in meeting future water demands. Supplies are nearly fully allocated in many basins across the West, and increased demand from population growth, economic development, and extreme weather and fire events places added stress on those limited water resources. Sustainability of our natural resources, specifically water, is imperative to the foundations upon which the West was developed. Growth and development can only continue upon our recognition of continued state stewardship of our unique resources and corresponding responsibilities.
4. Strong state, regional and national economies require reliable deliveries of good-quality water, which in turn depend on adequate infrastructure for water and wastewater. Investments in water infrastructure also provide jobs and a foundation for long-term economic growth in communities throughout the West. Repairs to aging infrastructure are costly and often subject to postponement.
5. Western Governors recognize the essential role of partnership with federal agencies in western water management and hope to continue the tradition of collaboration between the states and federal agencies.
6. Tribal governments and western states also share common water resource management challenges. The Western Governors Association and Western States Water Council have had a long and productive partnership with tribes, working to resolve water rights claims.

#### B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. **State Primacy in Water Management:** As the preeminent authority on water management within their boundaries, states have the right to develop, use, control and distribute the surface water and groundwater located within their boundaries, subject to international treaties and interstate agreements and judicial decrees.
  - a. **Federal Recognition of State Authority:** The federal government has long recognized the right to use water as determined under the laws of the various states; Western

Governors value their partnerships with federal agencies as they operate under this established legal framework.

While the Western Governors acknowledge the important role of federal laws such as the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), nothing in any act of Congress or Executive Branch regulatory action should be construed as affecting or intending to affect states' primacy over the allocation and administration of their water resources.

Authorization of water resources development legislation, proposed federal surplus water rulemakings, and/or storage reallocation studies should recognize natural flows and defer to the states' legal right to allocate, develop, use, control, and distribute their waters, including but not limited to state storage and use requirements.

- b. Managing State Waters for Environmental Purposes:** States and federal agencies should coordinate efforts to avoid, to the extent possible, the listing of water-dependent species under the ESA. When ESA listings cannot be avoided, parties should promote the use of existing state tools, such as state conservation plans and in-stream flow protections, to conserve and recover species.
- 2. Infrastructure Needs:** Aging infrastructure for existing water and wastewater facilities and the need for additional water projects cannot be ignored. Infrastructure investments are essential to our nation's continued economic prosperity and environmental protection, and they assist states in meeting federally-mandated standards.
  - a. Federal Support for Infrastructure Investment:** Congress should provide adequate support for the CWA and SDWA State Revolving Funds. Further, Congress should fully utilize the receipts accruing to the Reclamation Fund for their intended purpose in the continuing conservation, development and wise use of western resources to meet western water-related needs, including the construction of Congressionally-authorized Bureau of Reclamation rural water projects and facilities that are part of a Congressionally-authorized Indian water rights settlement.

Congress should authorize water resources development legislation on a regular schedule and appropriate funding so all projects and studies authorized in such legislation can be completed in a timely manner.

Congress also should consider facilitating greater investment in water infrastructure, utilizing such tools as loan guarantees, revolving funds, infrastructure banks and water trust funds.

Capital budgeting and asset management principles should be used to determine funding priorities based on long-term sustainability and not annual incremental spending choices. It should be accompanied by dedicated sources of funding with appropriate financing, cost-sharing, pricing and cost recovery policies.

- b. Alternatives to Direct Federal Investment:** Federal and state policymakers should also consider other tools to promote investment in water infrastructure and reduce financing costs, including: public-private partnerships, bond insurance, risk pooling, and credit enhancements.

Congress should remove the state volume caps for private activity bonds used for water and wastewater projects, provide guaranteed tax-exempt status for bonds issued by state or local agencies to finance water infrastructure, provide loan guarantees, and otherwise support and encourage alternatives to direct federal investment of limited general funds.

- c. **Hydropower:** Congress and the Administration should authorize and implement appropriate hydropower projects and programs through efficient permitting processes that enhance renewable electric generation capacity and promote economic development, while ensuring protection of important environmental resources and indigenous people's rights.
- d. **Infrastructure Planning and Permitting:** Infrastructure planning and permitting guidelines, rules and regulations should be coordinated, streamlined and sufficiently flexible to: (1) allow for timely decision-making in the design, financing and construction of needed infrastructure; (2) account for regional differences; (3) balance economic and environmental considerations; and (4) minimize the cost of compliance.

3. **Western States Require Innovative and Integrated Water Management:** Western Governors believe effective solutions to water resource challenges require an integrated approach among states and with federal, tribal and local partners. Federal investments should assist states in implementing state water plans designed to provide water for municipal, rural, agricultural, industrial and habitat needs, and should provide financial and technical support for development of watershed and river basin water management plans when requested by states.

Integrated water management planning should also account for flood control, water quality protection, and regional water supply systems. Water resource planning must preserve state authority to manage water through policies which recognize state law and financial, environmental and social values of water to citizens of western states today and in the future.

- a. **Water Transfers:** Western Governors recognize the potential benefits of market-based water transfers, meaning voluntary sales or leases of water rights. The Governors support water transfers that avoid or mitigate damages to agricultural economies and communities while preventing injury to other water rights, water quality, and the environment.
- b. **Energy Development:** Western Governors recognize that energy development and electricity generation may create new water demands. Western Governors recommend increased coordination across the energy and water management communities, and support ongoing work to assess the interconnection of energy and water through the Regional Transmission Expansion Planning Project for the Western Interconnection and similar efforts.
- c. **Conservation and Efficiency:** Because of diminished water resources and declining and inconsistent snowpack, Western Governors encourage adoption of strategies to sustain water resources and extend existing water supplies further through water conservation, water reuse and recycling, desalination and reclamation of brackish



waters, and reductions in *per capita* water use. The Governors encourage the use of and research into promising water-saving strategies.

- d. **Local Watershed Planning:** Western Governors encourage federal agencies and Congress to provide resources such as technical support to states and local watershed groups. States may empower these watershed groups to address local water issues associated with water quality, growth and land management to complement state water needs.
  - e. **Intergovernmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution:** Western Governors support the negotiated settlement of interstate water disputes, Indian and Hawaiian water rights claims, and other federal water needs and claims, the settlement of which are in the best interest of western states.
  - f. **State-Federal Coordination:** Western Governors recognize the important role of federal agencies in water resource management in the western states. Governors appreciate the efforts of federal agencies to coordinate water-related activities, particularly through the Western States Water Council, and support the continuation of these key state-federal partnerships.
4. **Western States Need Reliable Water Resource Information:** Basic information on the status, trends and projections of water resource availability is essential to sound water management.
- a. **Basic Water Data:** Western Governors support the U.S. Geological Survey's Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather and hydrology-related data collection, monitoring, and drought information programs, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's National Land Imaging (Landsat) Program with its thermal infrared sensor. Western Governors support federal efforts to coordinate water data gathering and information programs across multiple agencies.
  - b. **Extreme Weather Events Planning:** Western Governors recognize the significant potential impacts of extreme weather events and variability in water supplies. Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration to work closely with states and other resource managers to improve predictive and adaptive capabilities for extreme weather variability and related impacts. We specifically urge the federal government to place a priority on improving the sub-seasonal and seasonal precipitation forecasting capabilities that could support water management decision-making.
  - c. **Water Data Exchange:** The Western Governors' Association and the Western States Water Council have worked together to create the Water Data Exchange, an online portal that will enable states to share their water data with each other, federal agencies, and the public via a common platform. The Governors encourage the use of state water data in planning for both the public and private sectors.
5. **Drought Preparedness and Response:** As exceptional levels of drought persist across the West, Governors are leading on drought preparedness and response through the Western Governors' Drought Forum. The Drought Forum provides a

framework for leaders from states, businesses, non-profits, communities, research organizations and federal agencies to share best practices and identify policy options for drought management. The Governors have identified several areas in need of additional attention from Drought Forum partners, including:

- a. **Data and Analysis:** Basic data on snowpack, streamflow and soil moisture is essential to understanding drought. Though a great deal of information already exists, enhanced drought data collection and real-time analysis at a higher resolution is essential. Governors support state and federal efforts to maintain adequate collection of drought and water data, enhance data networks where appropriate, and facilitate better use of existing information.

The Governors appreciate the collaborative efforts on drought provided through NOAA's National Weather Service River Forecast Centers and Weather Forecast Offices, and the Office of Atmospheric Research's labs and programs, such as the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS).

- b. **Produced, Reused, and Brackish Water:** Technology exists to use produced, reused, recycled and brackish water -sources traditionally considered to be marginal or wastewater. Adoption of this technology has been limited by inadequate data, regulatory obstacles, financial barriers, public attitudes and logistical uncertainties. Governors support regulatory streamlining and policy options to encourage use of produced, brackish, and reused water where appropriate.
- c. **Forest Health and Soil Stewardship:** Better land management practices for forests and farmland may help improve availability and soil moisture retention. Wildfires can cause sediment runoff in water systems, leading to problems for reservoir management and water quality. Governors support policies and practices that encourage healthy and resilient forests and soils in order to make the most of existing water supplies.
- d. **Water Use Efficiency and Conservation:** Public awareness of drought has directed increasing attention to water conservation strategies, both in-home and on-farm. Governors encourage municipal, industrial and agricultural water conservation strategies as drought management strategy.
- e. **Infrastructure and Investment:** Water infrastructure to store and convey water is crucial to drought management, but maintenance and expansion of that infrastructure is often difficult to fund. Governors support efforts to make the most of existing infrastructure, while seeking creative solutions to add more infrastructure with limited resources.
- f. **Working within Institutional Frameworks to Manage Drought:** Legal frameworks and regulatory regimes can sometimes limit the ability of state, local and federal agencies to respond quickly to drought conditions. Governors believe that innovative, flexible policy solutions, such as streamlined processing of temporary water transfers, should be considered when managing drought.

- g. **Communication and Collaboration:** Communication among state officials, federal agency representatives, water providers, agricultural users and citizens is a crucial component of effective drought response. The Western Governors' Drought Forum will continue to provide a framework for sharing best practices through its online resource library, informational webinars, and strategy-sharing meetings for the duration of this resolution.

**C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE**

1. The Governors direct the WGA staff, where appropriate, to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction and the Executive Branch to achieve the objectives of this resolution including funding, subject to the appropriation process, based on a prioritization of needs.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to develop, as appropriate and timely, detailed annual work plans to advance the policy positions and goals contained in this resolution. Those work plans shall be presented to, and approved by, Western Governors prior to implementation. WGA staff shall keep the Governors informed, on a regular basis, of their progress in implementing approved annual work plans.

*Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a bi-annual basis. Please consult [www.westgov.org/policies](http://www.westgov.org/policies) for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.*