



AMERICAN WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION
Community, Conversation, Connections

Setting a Direction for U.S. Water Policy

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US Water Policy

- Water policy in the US has its basis in the dissimilar riparian and prior use doctrines together with federal laws, state laws, and compacts
- Laws prior to 1950 dealt almost exclusively with water resource development
- Laws since 1950 dealt almost exclusively with water resource protection
- Result is ad hoc - a fragmented, often conflicting, set of policies

Some questions?

- Do we really have an existing “National” water policy?
- If so, what is it?
- Is a “National” water policy even feasible or realistic given the large geographic differences in the United States?



Water Policy Dialogues

- AWRA's Board of Directors addressed water resources policy in an early 2001 meeting recognizing both new and existing impacts on the Nation's water resources:
 - Aging water resources infrastructure
 - Changing population dynamics
 - Unequal distribution of freshwater resources
 - Water quality issues including emerging contaminants
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Flooding and drought
 - Changing land uses
 - Climate change
- Given these issues, the Board launched a series of “dialogues” on water resources policy to provide suggestions and recommendations for water resources policy direction in the 21st century



SCOPE OF THE DIALOGUES

AWRA's Water Resources Policy Dialogues have been completely objective, providing each participant with a heightened awareness of ALL sides of important water resources policy issues primarily for the United States.

The Dialogues reviewed existing federal water policies and how they impact state and local entities. Attendees identified future federal policy issues.

WPD1	Washington, DC	September 2002
WPD2	Tucson, AZ	February 2005
WPD3	Arlington, VA	January 2007
WPD4	Washington, DC	September 2008

SCOPE OF THE DIALOGUES (Cont.)

The participants represented *all water resources disciplines*, and included water resources policy makers from the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, and from all other levels of government including tribal governments; environmental groups; academics and researchers; industrial and development representatives; and the general public.



Sponsoring Organizations

The first three Dialogues were sponsored by the following water resources agencies and organizations:

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
NOAA, National Ocean Service
NOAA, National Weather Service
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
U. S. Bureau of Reclamation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U. S. Geological Survey

31 NGOs and Non-federal organizations



US Water Resources Priorities – 4th Dialogue

The 4th Dialogue focused on those priorities identified during the first three:

- **Setting a Direction** – resolving the current ad hoc national water policy
- **Working Together Holistically** – multidisciplinary approaches to water resources issues using collaboration
- **Building on Science** – the need for good science to support sound policy decisions

Fourth Dialogue – September 2008 Discussion to Action

- One day meeting co-sponsored by ASCE and NW
- Purpose was to determine actions to recommend to the new Administration and Congress to face national water challenges
- Attended by 56 invited water resources professionals representing federal agencies, state agencies, local entities, congressional staff, and NGO's
- Strong support from House Water Caucus
- Consensus recommendations were developed by attendees
- Recommendations furnished to Obama Transition Team, Congressional Leaders, and Governors

4 American Water Resources Association's National Water Resources Policy Dialogue

Recommendation 1

- There is an immediate need for an **assessment** of the Nation's water resources to include the current status of the resource, the future needs for water and identification of gaps that exist in fulfilling these needs

4 American Water Resources Association's
National Water Resources Policy Dialogue

Recommendation 2

- The federal government, in cooperation with state and local agencies, needs to develop **a national vision and overarching principles** to guide water resources development activities supported by the federal government

4 American Water Resources Association's
National Water Resources Policy Dialogue

Recommendation 3

- There is increasing need for mechanisms that will **better coordinate the water related activities** of federal agencies and among congressional committees. The absence of effective coordination is apparent in the conflicts and overlaps that exist in legislation, programs, and agency activities

4 American Water Resources Association's
National Water Resources Policy Dialogue

Recommendation 4

- **The federal government's role in water resources**, long seen to be a driving force, **must be reevaluated** in light of growing state and regional attention and direction of water resource activities, i.e., resting on National (not federal) Policies

4 American Water Resources Association's
National Water Resources Policy Dialogue

Recommendation 5

(very similar to Recommendation 4)

- **Federal actions** with regard to water resources **must be taken in a watershed context** where the underlying planning is conducted in **partnership** with the states and local entities
- Comprehensive Planning
- Collaboration

What has happened since the 4th Dialogue?

- Recommendation 1: ASSESSMENT - USGS has authorization (but not yet appropriations) for a National Water Census
- Recommendation 2: VISION - A National Water Vision is under active discussion. Duane Smith will discuss later in this meeting
- Recommendation 3: COORDINATION - The Congressional Water Caucus comprised of almost 50 members of Congress is taking a much more active role in coordination

What has happened since the 4th Dialogue? (Cont.)

- Recommendation 4: FEDERAL ROLE - HR 135 has been reintroduced into the Congress - Would establish a commission to study and develop recommendations for a strategy to address future water needs. HR 1145 - similar - Establish a committee to coordinate federal water research. SR-787 - Clean Water Restoration Act sent to full Senate for action
- Recommendation 5: WATERSHED FOCUS: Working successfully in places like the Delaware River Basin Commission
Discussions underway for possible regional policy dialogues

Thank you

Questions?