



**POSITION  
of the  
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL  
regarding  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION DROUGHT RESPONSE PROGRAM  
Manhattan, Kansas  
October 9, 2015**

**WHEREAS**, the Western States Water Council is a policy advisory body representing eighteen states and since its inception, the Council has been actively involved in national drought preparedness, planning and response, as well as related policy and program development and implementation; and

**WHEREAS**, in the West, water is often scarce even in “wet” years and drought is a recurring threat to our environment, economy and way of life – affecting not only the West, but also the Nation; and

**WHEREAS**, three of the top five national natural disasters, in terms of economic losses, have been droughts, and the current exceptional drought in California and extreme to severe conditions along the West Coast and elsewhere highlight the need for greater attention to developing more comprehensive and coordinated drought prediction, preparedness, planning and response programs at all levels; and

**WHEREAS**, the Western Governors’ Association has taken a lead role in identifying needs and best management practices through an ongoing series of forums, webinars and reports; and

**WHEREAS**, the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 (43 U.S.C. 2214(c)) and subsequent reauthorizations, under Title I, provide only temporary authority for some critical Reclamation actions; and

**WHEREAS**, Reclamation’s current Drought Response Program supports a proactive approach to drought and provides financial assistance to water managers and users to: (1) develop drought contingency plans; (2) implement drought resiliency projects to build the capacity of communities to mitigate and respond to drought – increasing the reliability of water supplies, improving water management and operational flexibility, facilitate voluntary sales, transfers or exchanges of water, and provide benefits for fish and wildlife and the environment; and (3) undertake emergency actions to minimize losses due to drought through temporary construction activities and other activities, including water purchases and the use of Reclamation facilities to convey and store water; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a continuing need for making permanent the temporary authority allowing Reclamation the flexibility to continue delivering water to meet authorized project purposes, meet environmental requirements, respect state water rights, work with all stakeholders, and provide leadership, innovation, and assistance; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Western States Water Council strongly supports legislation to permanently authorize Title I activities under the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act, and provide for adequate appropriations to meet priority needs and continue the Reclamation Drought Response Program.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Council urge and encourage the Administration and the Congress to assess and consider the need for a comprehensive national drought preparedness and response program on par with federal efforts to address other natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and similar extreme events.