



RESOLUTION
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
regarding the
RURAL WATER and WASTEWATER PROJECT/INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS
and
U.S. DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Nebraska City, Nebraska
April 14, 2017

WHEREAS, in the West, water is indeed our “life blood,” a vital and scarce resource the availability of which has and continues to circumscribe growth, development, our economic and environmental well-being and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, across the West, many small, rural and tribal communities are experiencing water supply shortages due to drought, declining streamflows and groundwater supplies, and inadequate infrastructure, with some communities hauling water over substantial distances to satisfy their potable water needs; and

WHEREAS, often water supplies that are available to these communities are of poor quality and may be impaired by naturally occurring and man-made contaminants, including arsenic and carcinogens, which impact communities’ health and their ability to comply with increasingly stringent federal water quality and drinking water mandates; and

WHEREAS, many small, rural and tribal communities (including colonias) also face challenges related to meeting federal mandates for wastewater treatment; and

WHEREAS, at the same time, many small, rural and tribal communities in the West are suffering from significant levels of unemployment and simply lack the financial capacity and expertise to plan, finance and construct needed drinking water and wastewater system improvements; and

WHEREAS, there is a Federal responsibility to assist these communities in meeting related federal mandates to achieve water and wastewater public health goals; and

WHEREAS, the Budget Blueprint from the Executive Office of the President/Office of Management and Budget proposes elimination of USDA’s water and wastewater grant and loan programs, at a savings of \$498 million, saying rural communities can be served by private sector financing or other federal investments, such as the Environmental Protection Agency’s State Revolving Funds (SRF); and

WHEREAS, EPA’s SRF program is already oversubscribed, and these USDA programs help provide financing for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and stormwater drainage for individual households, businesses,

cooperatives, private non-profits, and state and local governmental entities and tribal communities – many without access to private, commercial credit on reasonable terms or other federal financial assistance (including the SRFs); and

WHEREAS, these programs help very small, financially distressed communities by providing long-term low interest loans (up to 40 years at fixed rates determined by need), loan guarantees, and grants (if funds are available), and related programs provide technical assistance and training grants; and

WHEREAS, these wise investments of federal dollars can help businesses and manufacturers to locate or expand operations in these communities, providing an economic boost, as well as environmental improvements and other long-term returns.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Western States Water Council urges the Administration and Congress to carefully consider the needs of small, rural and tribal communities and businesses and provide or otherwise ensure they have access to financial and technical assistance sufficient to ensure they can meet federal water quality and drinking water mandates, as well as achieve public health goals.