



Western States Water Council

A VISION ON WATER¹

Our Mission

To ensure that the West has an adequate, secure and sustainable supply of water of suitable quality to meet its diverse economic and environmental needs now and in the future.

Our Present Condition

Water in the West is an increasingly scarce and precious resource. Western States have and will continue to face unique hydrologic, legal and infrastructure challenges. Population growth, competing economic and ecological demands, and changing social values have left surface and ground water supplies stressed in many areas. This has increased the number and complexity of conflicts among users and uses. A secure water future is becoming more costly and increasingly uncertain given our unpredictable climate, aging and often inadequate infrastructure, data limitations regarding water supplies and demands, competing or poorly defined water rights, and a constantly evolving regulatory landscape. Effectively addressing these challenges will require stronger collaboration and cooperation that transcends political and geographic boundaries between states, federal agencies, tribes, and local communities.

Our Principles

- Water must be recognized as a critical public policy priority given the importance of the resource to our public health, economy, food security, environment, and western way of life. We must cultivate a western water conservation ethic through greater understanding of, and appreciation for, water's value.
- State primacy is fundamental to a sustainable water future. Federal water planning, policy development, regulation, protection, and management must recognize, defer to, and support state water laws, plans, policies, programs, water rights administration, adjudication and regulation, compacts and settlements. Rather than attempt to dictate water policy, the federal government should engage states early in meaningful consultation and contribute its fair share of funding to support implementation of state water planning and management, thus avoiding, or at least minimizing, the need for federal regulatory mandates.
- An integrated, collaborative, and grassroots approach to water resources management is critical to the environmentally sound and efficient use of our water resources. States, federal agencies, tribes, and local communities should work together to identify water problems and develop optimal solutions at the lowest appropriate level. Striving for cooperation rather than litigation, we must recognize and respect national, state, regional, local and tribal differences in values related to water resources.
- Sustainable water resource management and development should yield long term economic growth, enhanced protection and restoration of significant aquatic ecosystems, and improved economic and environmental security and quality of life.
- A secure and sustainable water future will be determined by our ability to maintain, replace, expand and make the most efficient use of critical water infrastructure. We must preserve and improve existing infrastructure, as well as encourage and support innovative water supply strategies and new storage options to better balance supplies with demands.
- All levels of government must prioritize the collection, analysis and open sharing of reliable data regarding water availability, quality, and usage given its importance to research for sound science and data driven decision making.

¹ Revised and Adopted on October 26, 2018