



**POSITION STATEMENT
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
in support of
STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCY OF OUR NATION
TO THE IMPACTS OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS**

**Casper, Wyoming
June 26, 2013**

WHEREAS, the Nation continues to suffer the effects, including loss of life and economic, social, and environmental damages, from increasingly extreme weather events, including tornadoes, hurricanes, extreme precipitation, and drought; and

WHEREAS, Western States have recently experienced extreme seasonal and year-to-year weather volatility that has brought record or near-record events with floods, followed by drought and wildfires, as well as devastating tornadoes, all threatening public safety and property, and often taxing the capacity of our aging water infrastructure system; and

WHEREAS, the 2012 prolonged drought afflicting the West and the Nation was nearly unprecedented in its scope, duration and severity – and developed so quickly as to be commonly referred to as a “flash drought;” and

WHEREAS, the drought has been magnified in regions of the country due to the failure of Mexico to deliver the water required to the United States under the treaties executed by the two countries, and

WHEREAS, present water resources planning and sound decision-making depends on our ability to understand, monitor, predict, and adapt to droughts, floods, extreme storms, and other weather events as well as reliable treaty commitments; and

WHEREAS, investments in research, forecasting, and monitoring the development of extreme weather events provide an opportunity to significantly improve planning and project design and operation to avoid or minimize the loss of life and property, as well as mitigate economic and environmental damages; and

WHEREAS, advances in weather forecasting and research, such as that of NOAA’s Hydrometeorological Testbed program on West Coast atmospheric rivers, demonstrate the potential for improving extreme event forecasting at the operational time scale; and

WHEREAS, in the West, sound decisionmaking demands accurate and timely data on precipitation, temperature, soil moisture, snow depth, snow water content, streamflow, and similar information; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for maintaining and improving existing monitoring networks that help provide early warning as well as tracking impacts of extreme events; and

WHEREAS, the Council has supported development of an improved observing system for Western extreme precipitation events, to aid in monitoring, prediction, and climate trend analysis associated with extreme storms; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for developing new monitoring technologies such as remote sensing that provide more timely data availability and better spatial coverage for assessing drought impacts; and

WHEREAS, the Council supports reauthorization of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and the Bureau of Reclamation's Emergency Drought Response authority; and

WHEREAS, there is a continuing need for greater collaboration between and among federal agencies, federal and state agencies (including local government), non-governmental and public/private organizations and businesses;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Western States Water Council supports as a high priority federal administrative actions to authorize and implement appropriate actions to plan, prepare for and avoid, minimize or mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events, including developing an expanded and enhanced westwide extreme precipitation monitoring system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Western States Water Council also supports legislation advancing the goals of: (1) minimizing the loss of life and property and economic, environmental and social cost from extreme weather events; (2) improving collaboration and coordination among agencies and organizations at all levels; (3) increasing consultation with state, local and tribal governments; (4) maintaining and enhancing data gathering and monitoring, as well as communication capabilities, identifying and addressing gaps and overlap; (5) identifying and addressing federal agency responsibilities, as well as regulatory and other preparedness and response barriers, (6) recognizing and addressing regional differences; and (7) avoiding unfunded mandates -- and pledges to work with the Congress to appropriately address current and future needs to improve extreme events response and resiliency.