



**AMERICAN WATER
RESOURCES ASSOCIATION**

Community, Conversation, Connections

A NATIONAL WATER VISION?

AWRA's Position

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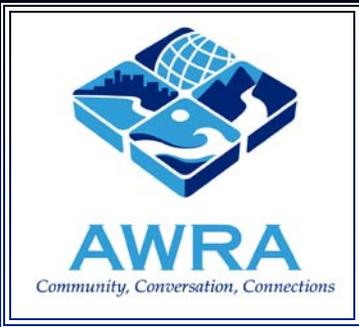
Sustainable Water Resources Roundtable

American University

April 27, 2011

Present U. S. Water Policy

- Water policy in the US has its basis in the dissimilar riparian and prior use doctrines buttressed by more recent laws and compacts
- Laws prior to 1960 deal almost exclusively with water resource development
- Laws since 1960 deal almost exclusively with water resource protection
- Result is a fragmented, often conflicting, ad- hoc policy



Water Policy Dialogues

- AWRA's Board of Directors addressed water resources policy in an early 2001 meeting recognizing the Nation's:
 - Aging water resources infrastructure
 - Changing population dynamics
 - Unequal distribution of freshwater resources
 - Changing land use
 - Climate change

The Board decided to launch a series of "dialogues" on water resources policy to provide suggestions and recommendations to set a direction for water resources policy 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.

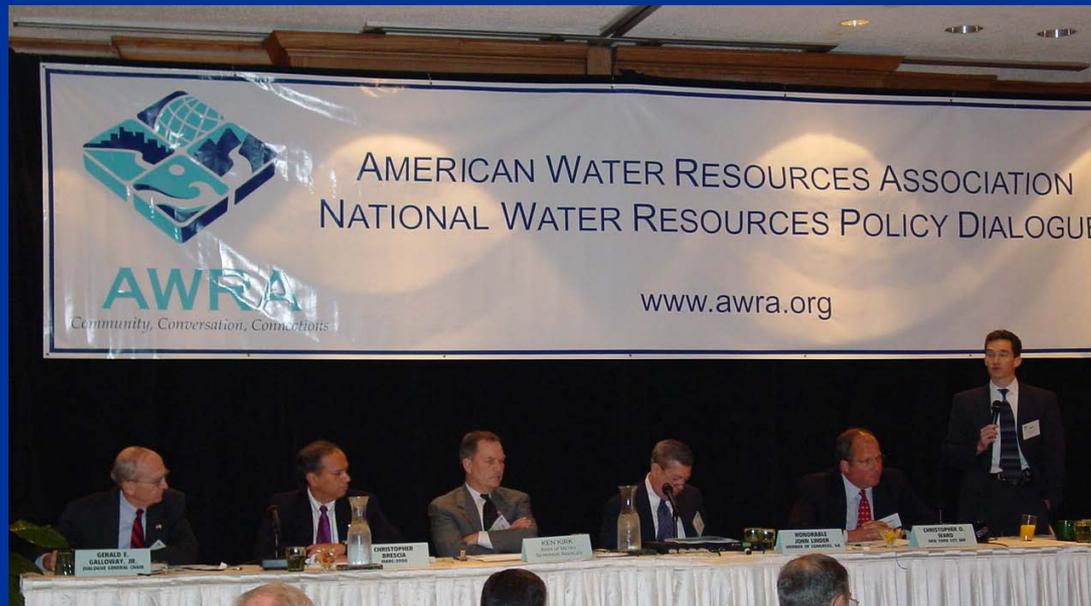
They reviewed existing federal water policies and how they impact state and local entities, and identified future federal policy issues.



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

SCOPE OF THE DIALOGUES

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 representatives; and the general public.



Recommendations of the Dialogues

- Develop a national water vision
- Conduct an up-to date national assessment of the Nation's water challenges
- Improve coordination between federal water agencies (horizontal collaboration)
- Improve coordination across levels of government (vertical collaboration)
- Move from federal-centric thinking and embrace greater state and local leadership
- Watershed based planning

“When we have a vision and a coalition to implement a reasonable plan, resources can be obtained” – Rep. Earl Blumenauer



A National Water Vision

- The federal government in cooperation with state and local entities needs to develop a national water vision and overarching principles to guide water resources development activities

What is a vision?

- Dictionary definition: The ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom

So, to paraphrase

A National Water Vision is a overarching plan developed with imagination and wisdom to enable development of rational water resources policies for the Nation

What a vision isn't

- A policy
- A law

Next Steps?

- So what has transpired within *AWRA* since the last dialogue regarding a National Water Vision?

AWRA Policy Technical Committee

Recommended Action

- In 2010, based both on the Dialogue recommendations, and recommendations from the 2009 meetings held by the USACE on “Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future” in which AWRA was an active participant, the AWRA Policy Technical Committee, a committee of volunteers, developed a recommended action/ position statement for a National Water Vision and Strategy
- In November 2010, the position statement was submitted to the AWRA Board of Directors for consideration

Position Statement on a National Water Vision

- The American Water Resources Association recommends development of a national water vision and strategy for how to best use, protect and manage our water resources. A national water vision and strategy should be developed to provide a clear framework for sustainable management of our water resources, clarify roles and responsibilities, increase accountability, reduce conflict, improve the integrated management of resources, provide water security for future generations and save public funds through more effective use of resources.

Rationale

- After people, water is our most critical and strategic resource. Yet we have no national vision for its management. Because the threats of aging infrastructure, climate change and population growth are so significant, the nation can no longer afford to postpone action. It is imperative we initiate a focused effort to create a national water vision and articulate a strategy to sustain the nation's water resources. Our nation's future growth and prosperity will depend upon the sustainable integrated management of its water.

Why is a vision needed?

- Our nations water planning and regulatory systems are fragmented from top to bottom
- More than 20 federal agencies are responsible for some aspect of water resources
- Each state and many tribes have one or more agencies responsible for managing water resources in their jurisdictions
- Hundreds more public and private sector entities manage water resources within the U. S.

The Bottom Line

- A national water vision and strategy would provide a blueprint for more effective, coordinated management across sectors and levels of government

What are the Critical Elements?

- Clean water is a basic human right
- Integrated water resources management
- Shared values
- Broad stakeholder participation and leadership
- Planning for long term sustainability
- Clear allocation of responsibility for international, national, tribal, regional, state, county and local entities

Critical Elements, continued:

- Watershed based collaborative planning and decision making
- Ability to evolve and adapt to changing water supplies and conditions
- Acknowledgement of state and tribal authority and responsibility for certain/several/many aspects of water quantity and water quality

Initial Focus of a Vision – Broad National Themes

- National water resources assessment
- Accounting for the full cost/value of water
- Recognition of clean water as a basic human right
- Recognition of clean water as an economic good
- Recognition of clean water as an ecological necessity

National Themes continued:

- Strategies for aging infrastructure
- Strategies for degraded ecosystems
- Conservation and water use efficiencies
- Strategies of effective use of professional resources
- Public education and outreach
- Technology transfer
- Contingency planning for water emergencies
- International water sharing
- Holistic, adaptive systems approach

AWRA's Position

- The position paper developed by the Policy Technical Committee of the American Water Resources Association on a National Water Vision was adopted unanimously by the AWRA Board of Directors on January 24, 2011
- This position is not a vision but contains at least some of the critical elements that might be found in a National Vision

Possible Roadblocks to a Vision

- Complacency
- East versus west
- State, local, tribal opposition
- Funding

AWRA believes that these roadblocks are steep but are not insurmountable

How would the Vision impact National Water Policy?

The vision is the first step – a clear delineation of its components

Based on the vision, a strategy for revising, and implementing changes to the national water policy is developed

Theoretically, from the strategy, an updated, effective national water policy would be developed and implemented

The Future?

- *AWRA is in the early states of planning a dialogue on a National Water Vision*
- *AWRA has recently signed an MOU with the Clean Water America Alliance, an organization with similar goals and who is committed to the basic ideas of a vision*
- *AWRA has been sharing ideas with the Congressional Water Caucus within which there are open minds to the idea of a vision*

THANK YOU!

- Questions?
- Comments?

Any organization that would like to know more about AWWRA's position on a National Water Vision, or participate in a dialogue regarding the vision should contact AWWRA at www.awra.org or 540-687-8390