



WESTCAS_{news}

February 2008





MISSION

Sustainable water quality and quantity in the Arid West

VISION

To be:

- The premier, grass-roots organization for providers of water, wastewater and reclaimed water services in the Arid West.
- A responsive coalition on behalf of our members and their customers.
- A reliable source of information about water quality issues to our members and the public.
- An advocate for environmentally sound management of water resources and the protection of public health.
- A contributor to policy, regulations, science, legislation, and appropriations on Arid West water quality issues.

GOALS

Goal 1:

Advocate laws, regulations, standards, and policies that provide for environmentally sound, science-based protection and wise use of water resources in unique Arid West ecosystems.

Goal 2:

Actively champion federal funding for water quality and quantity issues, programs, and infrastructure in the Arid West states.

Goal 3:

Ensure WESTCAS remains effective as the Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West.

WESTCAS February Conference Overview

Our climate is changing – why, how much, how fast – are all questions that have yet to be definitively answered.

WESTCAS members are charged with providing water and wastewater services to communities throughout the arid west. We cannot afford to wait until the answers to “how much” and “how fast” are final before we respond to the changing conditions. The WESTCAS conference in Albuquerque from February 20-22 will focus on what can be initiated now to address changing climate conditions.

The conference will start with two stage-setting presentations about what climate changes we might expect and how those climate changes are projected to be manifested “on the ground” in water sources. With these estimates of the potential scope and magnitude of water supply impacts, the remaining sessions will explore technologies for stretching waster budget. One aspect is improved treatment and reuse. Panelists will describe water treatment technologies to clean up effluent with very little water loss and treatment for produced water from oil and gas production. An example of indirect potable reuse on a community-scale will also be described.

Another aspect of adapting to climate change is water storage. Our reservoirs have the effect of “spreading our water out to dry”. Aquifer storage and recharge projects in the west will be discussed by a number of panelists. Interspersed between panel discussions, WESTCAS committees will consider what WESTCAS can do to ameliorate barriers to implementing these water and wastewater adaptations to climate change. WESTCAS members can use

our collective voices to overcome funding, legislative, and regulatory hurdles to addressing the future state of water and wastewater.

WESTCAS Engages Emerging Climate Change Issues

With widespread publicity regarding the topic of climate change and its impact on water supplies in the arid west, WESTCAS engaged in a dialogue with other key water sector organizations in Albuquerque, New Mexico on December 4-5, 2007. A Water Sector Forum on Climate Change was conducted to discuss the impacts of climate change on water resources. More than 40 utility representatives attended the Forum, which was co-sponsored by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA); the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF); and WESTCAS. Water supply and the steps needed to ensure that enough safe water would be available to meet the needs of future generations was the major topic at the Forum. All of the water organization representatives voiced the need to work collaboratively in asserting the professional recommendations on behalf of the water sector.

As a result of this Water Sector Forum on Climate Change, the above-mentioned organizations sent a joint letter to EPA’s Assistant Administrator, Office of Water, Benjamin Grumbles on January 8, 2008 urging that EPA issue their draft climate change strategy for public comment, as soon as possible. The letter went on to state:

“In early December, we convened a climate change forum at which leaders

from the water and wastewater utility community gathered and discussed their climate change-related initiatives, current national policy and emerging legislation, as well as how water resource managers can plan for the challenges of global climate change. Water sector representatives from across the country described a variety of projects and efforts underway related to climate change, including water conservation, recycling and reuse, energy saving measures, and other cooperative initiatives among utilities and their communities.”

“Water utility organizations recognize the importance of collaboration when facing this global issue. We urge you to release the National Water Program Strategy on Climate Change as soon as possible so that we can better coordinate with and support your efforts.”

The full text of the letter, as well as other related news items can be found on the WESTCAS web-site: www.westcas.org.

WESTCAS Participates in Annual Water Associations Summit

The Third Annual Water Associations Summit was held in Washington, D.C on January 4, 2008. WESTCAS participated as an invited guest of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA). The attendees included the Presidents, Executive Directors, and Lobbyists from the following six (6) water organizations: American Metropolitan Water Agency (AMWA); Water Environment Federation (WEF); National Rural Water Association (NRWA); American Water Works Association (AWWA); National Association of Water Companies (NAWC); and NACWA. Charlie Nylander, WESTCAS President and Peter Carlson, Will & Carlson, Inc. participated on behalf of WESTCAS. The day’s agenda included opening statements by each of the water organizations, and a discussion of their top three priorities for 2008. For example, AMWA introduced their top three priorities as: climate change with a focus on adaptive management; water system security; and water utility leadership development.

The discussion of specific agenda issues included the following topics: Climate Change and Water; Infrastructure Sustainability; Watershed Approaches; Emerging Contaminants; and Chemical Security. Each topic was introduced by one of the six water organizations, and a thorough round table discussion was held regarding each topic and a number of sub-topics. All of the attendees were looking for common ground that could lead to future joint collaborative efforts on topics during the calendar year. For example, AMWA

listed four key areas for water sector collaboration:

- Communications: Developing unified water sector messages to Capitol Hill;
- Sharing: Developing more effective methods to share water-related information;
- Research: Planning to promote monitoring and collection of targeted data; and
- Education: Improving methods to educate and communicate water-related information with the public, especially information regarding “health risk”.

After listening and participating in the day’s discussion, Mr. Nylander said “it was encouraging to see the multitude of opportunities for future collaborations among member organizations in the water sector.” “We all speak the same “water” language”, he said “although there are obvious and definite challenges to over-come before we are all truly working from the same page.” He reflected on the propensity of many of the national water organizations to become too “Washington-centric” in their outlook, resulting in a loss of sensitivity regarding the real world of water and wastewater utility management, and the challenges with working at the local government level. In addition, Mr. Nylander reflected that there is also a penchant for too much focus national focus on EPA, and not enough attention to other federal agencies, e.g. Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, etc. that have significant numbers of water-related programs with budgets that impact water resource management. He used the current Farm Bill as an example of the tremendous potential for watershed management program funding that could be available from an agency like the U.S. Department of Agriculture, after the already-passed Senate and House of Representatives bills are melded through conference committee work this spring.

“All-in-all, I’m glad to have been invited by Ken Kirk, Executive Director of NACWA to this meeting of water sector organizations”, Nylander said. “It turns out that WESTCAS not only contributed to the substance of the meeting, but we served as a lightning rod to promote the inclusion of other water organizations in future annual meetings”, he said. “At the end of the day, the organizations were voicing support for broadening the attendance, especially by inviting organizations representing water reuse and stormwater management”, said Nylander. “I’m glad that WESTCAS was invited to participate because we have a lot to contribute regarding water issues, and especially our knowledge and focus on the arid west.” Mr. Nylander promised to provide a full report regarding the Water Association Summit at the WESTCAS Winter Conference to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico on February 20-22, 2008.