



**RESOLUTION
of the
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL
in support of
WATER INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING
Washington, DC
March 14, 2024**

WHEREAS, maintaining and delivering sufficient water supplies of suitable quality is key to the West's economic prosperity, environmental needs, and our quality of life, both now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, appropriate water-related infrastructure investments ensure our continued ability to store, manage, conserve, and control water during both floods and droughts – as well as protect and treat our water resources; and

WHEREAS, existing and new infrastructure is critical to meet drinking water, municipal and industrial, wastewater treatment, irrigation, hydropower, flood control, interstate compact, tribal settlement, international treaty, and fish and wildlife habitat needs; and

WHEREAS, the West depends on an intricate and aging system of weirs, diversions, dams, reservoirs, pipelines, aqueducts, pumps, canals, laterals, drains, levees, wells, stormwater channels, and water and wastewater treatment and hydroelectric power plants; and

WHEREAS, water infrastructure in the West is financed and maintained under a complex network of state, tribal, local, private, and federal ownership, benefitting a broad segment of water users and other stakeholders;

WHEREAS, inconsistent, inadequate, and untimely funding increases project construction and financing costs, as well as risk, including the failure of critical infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, substantial and sustained investments in water project construction, maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement is necessary and pays long-term dividends to the economy, public health and safety, and the environment; and

WHEREAS, water infrastructure systems require ongoing, thoughtful investments to account for life-cycle costs, and should be managed with planned retirement or replacement in mind; and

WHEREAS, existing federal, state and local programs to publicly finance water-related infrastructure projects are crucial, but insufficient to meet water quality and water resources management challenges related to future growth, including municipal, industrial, agricultural, environmental, and energy needs; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has a significant role to play in financing and cost-sharing for water-related infrastructure given federal economic and environmental objectives, federal tribal trust and treaty obligations, other past commitments, and federal regulatory mandates; and

WHEREAS, aging federal water infrastructure has deteriorated – due to underfunded and deferred maintenance, repair, and replacement needs – and in many cases has exceeded its useful lifespan, raising public health and safety issues, risking loss of life and threatening public and private property; and

WHEREAS, federal financial resources are limited and many authorized federal water infrastructure projects have not been started or remain incomplete for decades due to inconsistent, incremental, or insufficient appropriations; permitting and licensing backlogs; duplicative environmental reviews; litigation delays; and oversight by multiple federal agencies without adequate interagency coordination; and

WHEREAS, current federal budget scoring guidelines assess the full cost of infrastructure investments up front, while disproportionately discounting long-term economic, public health and safety, and environmental benefits – sometimes making new water project investments challenging to justify financially; and

WHEREAS, local water district and state agency investments, private capital markets, performance-based contracting, and other alternatives offer help to close the federal funding, delivery, and maintenance gaps, and meet some of our national water infrastructure needs in partnership with federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, such partnerships have the potential to reduce overall project development costs and risks associated with such capital investments, expedite project delivery and associated water resource benefits, improve efficiencies and cost effectiveness, and maximize the respective strengths of the public and private sectors; and

WHEREAS, opportunities exist to leverage federal and non-federal funding through grants, loans and credit enhancements, as well as provide greater access to private sources of financing; and

WHEREAS, there is no one-size-fits-all program, but several federal financial and technical assistance programs, grants, loans, cost-share programs, and federal-state-local or public-private partnerships have proven beneficial to the timely completion and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure projects at all scales; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies often lack legislative authority to dedicate a sustained revenue stream to assure non-federal investors are fairly compensated for the costs and risks of constructing or maintaining federal water projects, sometimes requiring approval through an act of Congress to proceed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council supports collaboration and leadership at all government levels – federal, state, tribal, and local – and the private sector – to address the Nation’s infrastructure needs and establish water infrastructure improvements as a public policy priority.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council supports appropriate federal investments in water-related infrastructure projects and programs that provide jobs and economic security, while protecting the environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Administration and Congress should work together to ensure adequate, stable, and continuing federal appropriations for constructing, maintaining, and replacing critical federal water projects and to assist States and local governments as they address their water infrastructure needs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council encourages Congress and the Administration to continue to work together and with States to streamline permitting processes and coordinate environmental and other regulatory reviews to eliminate duplicative procedures, reduce costs of compliance and construction, and ensure timely completion, maintenance, or relicensing of authorized infrastructure projects so vital to the West and the Nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council supports the creation and maintenance of dedicated water infrastructure funding through special accounts with dedicated receipts to be promptly appropriated for authorized purposes following their deposit, as well as a variety of grant, loan, credit enhancement and other financial incentive programs to help meet diverse needs at all scales.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council supports appropriate infrastructure asset management and capital budgeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council supports a method of congressional budget scoring that considers the unique timing of the costs and benefits of water infrastructure investments, and accounts for long-term public health and safety, economic and environmental benefits, with fair and appropriate discounting.

Revised and Readopted
(see former Position No. 462, March 25, 2021, and No. 419, March 14, 2018)