

March 25, 2013

Mr. Michael Connor
Commissioner
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Room 7657
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
Department of the Army 108 Army Pentagon
Room 3E446
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Commissioner Connor and Assistant Secretary Darcy:

The United States is facing one of the most severe droughts in history. This reality, especially in the West, is a potent reminder of the value of planning and preparedness. As the Executive Directors for the state water associations in the West participating in your departments' programs daily, **we are writing to enlist your support to increase the respective agency budgets for drought and water resource planning.** Our membership continues to experience the growing severity of the ongoing drought. Therefore, this assistance will be vital for our resilience to drought and will help ensure the adequacy of our water supply.

Since 2000, many of our members have recognized the importance of drought preparedness and water supply planning. As a result, many have been participating in the efforts of the National Drought Policy Commission in providing recommendations to prepare for drought. The Commission effort advanced many sound recommendations for drought preparedness and the policy statements in the report developed are as relevant today as they were when it was first drafted, such as:

National drought policy should use the resource of the federal government to support but not supplant nor interfere with state, regional, local, tribal and personal efforts to reduce drought impacts. The guiding principles of national drought policy should be:

1. Favor preparedness over insurance, insurance over relief, and incentives over regulation;
2. Set research priorities based on the potential of research results to reduce drought impacts; and
3. Coordinate the delivery of federal services through cooperation and collaboration with nonfederal entities.

Additionally, the Western Governors' Association importantly noted in their 2010 "*Water Needs and Strategies*" report:

"Drought planning should be embedded and integrated into water supply management, not an ad hoc response to the latest drought event."

"Federal agencies should change the way water planning is conducted by encouraging more comprehensive plans developed under state leadership with Federal assistance."

"Federal agencies with long range water supply planning responsibilities should work in cooperation with states to help communities develop drought preparedness plans, drought contingency plans, establish or enhance federal reservoir drought contingency plans, and be visible and engaged."

We are disappointed and deeply concerned that Federal agencies have yet to respond to the recommendations by the National Drought Policy Commission and the request of the Western Governors' Association to support comprehensive state-led planning. The lack of response continues as numerous reports and Congressional hearings have noted how our planning efforts as a nation remain "fragmented" and "unplanned".

We were stunned to see, in a recent release from the President's White House Rural Council covering the ongoing Administration efforts to respond to the drought, that the Interior Department's focus is only on 'grazing on Federal lands', while the Corps' sole emphasis is limited to 'communicating the availability of navigation channels'. Directly related to this issue, is the failure to adequately budget for needs in this area. The Bureau did not make a request in their FY'13 Budget for the Drought Emergency Assistance Program. Fortunately, Congress has put \$500,000 in the program. [It is impossible to discern whether the Bureau requested funds for this program in FY'12.]

Regarding available Corps' resources for drought planning, we are aware of the Corps' Planning Assistance to States program that Congress authorized in the *Water Resources Development Act of 1974*. The specific purpose of this program is to support comprehensive State water plans. Yet, the Corps has only requested \$4 million for the Planning Assistance to the States program in FY'13. [Note that for FY'12 the Corps requested \$5 million for this program and the Congress ended up providing almost \$5.3 million.] Despite this one exception, that we are aware of, the Corps has not been engaged in this program area. The Corps, through the Planning Assistance to the States program has in the recent past helped the State of Oklahoma with the development and modernizing of their state water plan.

The Bureau, through their drought program authority, has stepped beyond the West and provided assistance in the Southeast on drought planning. The underlying statute for both efforts, the *Water Resources Planning Act, Title III*, allows for this type of comprehensive planning and assistance. The core issue and concern with these actions is marrying the planning processes with a response to drought crises, instead of proactively planning to mitigate

the situation before it becomes a crises. If more or renewed authority is required we urge that each of you move forward expeditiously.

Specifically, our request is that you use congressionally authorized reprogramming authority (for your program for FY'12) to immediately provide funding in this vital area and that you do the same for FY'13. Furthermore, as you look to finalize your FY'14 Budget, we request that you demonstrate the importance of comprehensive state water planning by providing robust funding to the states. This will allow our members, in partnership with the states, to adequately engage one another locally and regionally for a strategic and effective response to this crisis. We believe this request is important and appropriate in order to meet our members' needs based upon scientifically sound drought projections. Also, we believe the Bureau and the Corps can and will become examples of how the leading federal agencies focus on "drought and planning."

We would like to work with both of you. By working together our efforts can continue to demonstrate that your two Departments recognize the importance of water in the West and the role it plays in the economy, meeting the needs of both urban and rural constituencies, the Native American community, irrigated agriculture, and the environment in this current drought. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

CHRIS UDALL, AGRI-BUSINESS COUNCIL OF ARIZONA

TIM QUINN, ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA WATER AGENCIES

DOUG KEMPER, COLORADO WATER CONGRESS

NORM SEMANKO, IDAHO WATER USER'S ASSOCIATION

MICHAEL DWYER, NORTH DAKOTA WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

APRIL SNELL, OREGON WATER RESOURCES CONGRESS

LEROY GOODSON, TEXAS WATER CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

CARLY BURTON, UTAH WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

TOM MYRUM, WASHINGTON STATE WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION