



**AMERICAN WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION**  
4 WEST FEDERAL STREET, P.O. BOX 1626, MIDDLEBURG VA 20118-1626  
PH: (540) 687-8390 FAX: (540) 687-8395 EMAIL: [INFO@AWRA.ORG](mailto:INFO@AWRA.ORG)  
[WWW.AWRA.ORG](http://WWW.AWRA.ORG)

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Contact: Richard Engberg at (540) 687-8390 or [dick@awra.org](mailto:dick@awra.org)  
Terry Meyer at (540) 687-8390 or [info@awra.org](mailto:info@awra.org)

## **Nation Faces Growing and Severe Water Challenges - Government Must Act *Third National Water Resources Policy Dialogue* Urges Immediate Action by President, Congress and States**

In letters to the President of the United States (attached), the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate Majority Leader and State and territorial Governors, the American Water Resources Association (AWRA), reporting the results of the *Third National Water Resources Policy Dialogue*, calls on the Administration, the Congress, and States and Territories to address the Nation's growing and severe water challenges.

AWRA points to major challenges facing the Nation: more frequent droughts, increasing demands for municipal and industrial water supply; ports and waterways operating at the margin; increasing annual flood damages; loss of critical wetlands; lack of funding to recover threatened and endangered species and restore damaged habitat; miles of rivers that do not meet water quality standards; impaired coastal waters and estuarine areas; major infrastructure renewal shortfalls; and, continuing conflicts over water use.

The *Dialogue* was held in Arlington on January 22-23, 2007 and was sponsored by AWRA, 12 federal agencies and 31 regional and non-governmental organizations. It brought together water experts from across the nation to hear from key federal, state, and local officials and to identify issues that needed to be brought to the attention of governments. Participants in the *Dialogue* included Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, Assistant Secretary of the Army John Paul Woodley, FEMA Mitigation Director David Maurstad, Congressmen John Linder (R-GA) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Pennsylvania Secretary of Environmental Protection Kathleen McGinty, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger, George Kuper, President of the Council of Great Lakes Industries, and Steve McCormick, President/CEO of the Nature Conservancy.

The letters note the strong sense within the *Dialogue* that the center of gravity for National water actions should rest at the state level and be backed by appropriate support from the federal government. They urge immediate action by the Administration, the Congress and the Governors to:

- Address the urgent requirement for a national assessment of water resources needs. It has been 30 years since the last national assessment.
- Work together to establish broad principles for water management – a national vision- that can be translated into water policies that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local governments and the public with respect to water and the goals and objectives that would establish a blueprint for future actions.
- Better coordinate water resources activities. Efforts of federal agencies overlap. The actions of the numerous Congressional committees similarly overlap and create conflicts.
- Encourage policies that promote watershed planning and change policies that do not.
- Ensure that the Nation's vast scientific knowledge about water is available to all, clearly presented, and fully considered in making decisions on key water issues.

**The letter's authors (AWRA President and Dialogue Co-chair Gerald E Galloway (571-334-2103), and Dialogue Co-chair Richard Engberg (703-625-5259) will be available for telephone interviews from 9 AM to 3 PM (EST), on Friday, February 23. Additional interviews may be arranged through AWRA staff at (540) 687-8390.**

AWRA is the premier non-governmental organization dedicated to the advancement of multidisciplinary water resources management and research. For over 40 years, AWRA has provided a forum for water resources conservation and networking. AWRA has members in every state and in over 50 nations. For more information, visit AWRA's website at: <http://www.awra.org>

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