

January 6, 2003



The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
416 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader:

Our Nation faces a water resources crisis. The year 2002 saw drought across the country. In many areas, we do not have enough water for forecasted long-term municipal and industrial use. Many of our ports, the gateways to domestic and international trade and the mobility of our armed forces, are operating at the margin in terms of channel depths. Annual flood losses in the United States continue to worsen in spite of nearly 70 years of federal action. We are losing 70,000 to 90,000 acres of non-federal wetland annually and are having great difficulty reducing the list of 1260 threatened or endangered plants and animals. EPA's 2000 assessment of US water quality found that more than 291,000 miles of assessed rivers and streams do not meet water quality standards and the picture is not getting substantially better. The quality of U.S. coastal waters are rated fair to poor and 44% of estuarine areas in the US are impaired for human or aquatic life use. The American Society of Civil Engineers 2001 Report Card for America's Infrastructure gave grades of D+ or lower to the conditions of our dams, drinking water systems, wastewater facilities, navigable waterways, and hydropower production capabilities.

At the same time, there is increasing support to remove dams that no longer serve their original purpose or threaten natural systems, for increased use of non-structural means of preventing flood damages, for new and innovative methods of producing energy and reducing and eliminating water pollution, and for more efficient use of the water resources that we have now. We continue to debate in our courts about the primacy of one water user over another, the rights of natural systems, and the rights of Native Americans.

American Water Resources Association

4 West Federal Street / P. O. Box 1626 / Middleburg, VA 20118-1626
PHONE: (540) 687-8390 / FAX: (540) 687-8395 / www.awra.org

Failure to address these water resources issues now, as we move into the 21st Century, could significantly impact the economy; reduce our capacity to participate in global markets; increase legal conflicts over rights and uses; reverse progress on cleaning up our rivers and restoring our natural areas; continue the escalation of flood damages; stymie our ability to effectively manage water; increase our vulnerability to terrorism both at home and abroad; and, dramatically diminish our capacity to help prevent violent conflict in the third world.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the management of our rivers became synonymous with building the Nation. It brought major sections of the country out of poverty and now helps keep our natural systems and people healthy. Recent reviews of the condition of the Nation's water infrastructure paint a gloomy picture. The massive multi-trillion dollar investment that made our growth possible is at risk. Our Nation once led the world in water technology and management. Today our water expertise is dwindling and with it our capacity to help lead the world's growing efforts to avert famine, drought and related humanitarian disasters – the breeding grounds of terrorism and violence. It has been over a quarter of a century since the last comprehensive assessment of US water needs. The federal guidance document for development of most water projects is nearly 20 years old. Efforts to deal with water issues are met by a plethora of interest groups, a dozen committees in Congress, numerous federal agencies, and programs that are narrowly focused and fail to recognize the interrelationship among water uses and the management of water.

Recognizing this situation, the American Water Resources Association, with the support of 10 federal agencies and 25 non-federal organizations that deal with water, recently convened a National Water Policy Dialogue. More than 250 water resources experts, including senior representatives of the Administration, Congress and state and local officials, met for two days to review the above challenges and to discuss what Congress and the Administration should do to head off this crisis.

Clear messages emerged out of the myriad recommended actions. The Dialogue participants ask the Administration and the Congress to:

- Develop a National Water Vision – Where does the Nation wish to be in 2020? Determine, in cooperation with the states and local governments, how the Nation wants to deal with water, address competing goals and objectives - social, environmental and economic - and establish broad priorities for resource expenditures.
- Formulate a National Water Policy that translates the vision into action. ***This is not a call for a federal water policy that directs the actions of federal, state and local governments.*** Rather, it is a call for a policy that defines the shared responsibilities at each level for dealing with water or the lack thereof and addresses how our citizens should adjust to the realities of floods and droughts.

American Water Resources Association

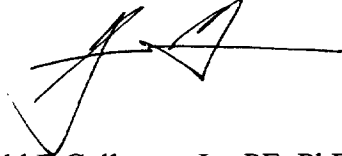
4 West Federal Street • P. O. Box 1626 • Middleburg, VA • 20117-1626
PHONE: (540) 687-8390 • FAX: (540) 687-8395 • www.awra.org

- Ensure coordination and collaboration among Federal agencies and with other agencies at state, regional, and local levels; consider incentives for gaining cooperation to reach policy objectives and connect water quality and water quantity for a unified water policy.
- Deal with water issues on a holistic basis. Use watersheds and basins as the setting for water resource projects and programs.

We have attached a summary of the Dialogue and additional recommendations that stemmed from the two-day discussions.

While AWRA does not advocate any specific policies, it calls on the Administration and Congress to challenge the government agencies under their authority to collaboratively create an "action agenda" to address the critical water resources challenges facing the Nation and to create such an agenda as soon as possible. We would be pleased to discuss the Dialogue and the conclusions reached with any group that you would deem appropriate.

The time for action is now.



Gerald E Galloway Jr., PE, PhD
Dialogue General Chair

/s/ Richard A. Engberg

Richard A. Engberg, RPH
Dialogue Steering
Committee Chair

CC: Governors
Members of the United States Senate
Members of the United State House of Representatives

American Water Resources Association

4 West Federal Street / P. O. Box 1626 / Middleburg, VA 20118-1626
PHONE: (540) 687-8390 / FAX: (540) 687-8395 / www.awra.org