

Do We Need A National Vision for Integrated and Sustainable Water Resources?

National Collaborative Water Resources Conference August 26, 2009

Ari M. Michelsen, Ph.D.
Texas AgriLife Research, Texas A&M University
President-elect, AWRA



Water Resources Challenges

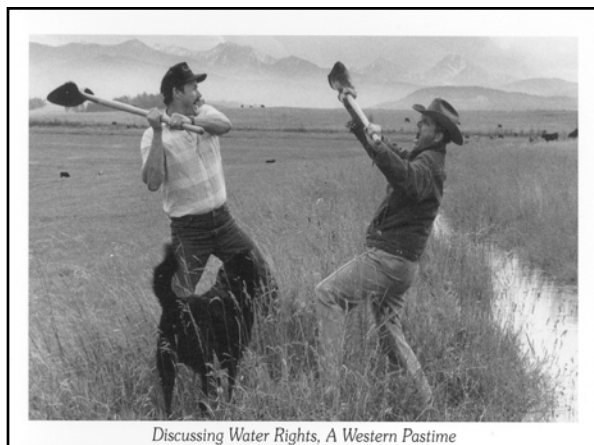
- Growing Demand & Energy-Water Demand
- Shortages, Drought, Climate Change
- Flood/Stormwater Management
- Environmental Concerns
- Water Quality Protection
- Aging Infrastructure
- Consistency of Policies and Regulations
- Multiple Responsibilities and Jurisdictions

Are We Achieving WR Needs?

- 25 Federal Agencies
- 20 Congressional Committees
- 50 States
- Legislative, procedural, regulatory morass
- Billions \$ authorized – earmarks, priorities?
- Is what we are doing in water resources management achieving what needs to be done effectively and efficiently?

Where do we want to be nationally in regard to water resources management?





Historical Context – Message Not New

- 1965 Water Resources Planning Act
 - WRC, Facilitate Interagency Planning, P&S
- 1973 National Water Commission
 - Concern: water availability & use to support people, economy and environment
 - Lack of policy/adoption of policy
 - 200 recommendations including
 - Multiple-objective planning and management
 - River basin approach

- 1981 Report to Water Resource Council *Impediments for Development of Water Resource Projects*
 - Major impediment: Lack of national WR policy
 - Recommendation: Establish a national water policy
 - How do you plan without vision to know where you want be?
- 1998 Western Water Policy Review
 - Federal activities need to be coordinated and
 - Federal programs need to be integrated

AWRA National Water Policy Dialogues

- Four Dialogues - 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008
- Sponsored/proposed by ten federal agencies and 31 NGOs and non-Federal organizations
- Participants represented all water resources disciplines and included executive & legislative policy makers and other levels of government, environmental groups, academics, industrial and development representatives and the general public
- Outcome: Letters to President and senior leaders and summary reports

Dialogue Recommendations

- Develop a national (not federal) water vision
- This national vision and overarching principles need to be developed through collaboration of federal, state and local entities
- Develop principles and policies for translating the vision into action
- Use Integrated Water Resources Management* and River Basin/Watershed approach

* IWRM

➤ 2003– Water 2025 USBR

- Principles to guide water management/decisions
- 2006, 2008 Western Governors Association *Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future*
 - Federal-State cooperation, framework, support
- 2009 Congressional Research Service *35 Years of Water Policy: The 1973 National Water Commission and Present Challenges*
 - Policy by executive and judicial actions and piece meal legislation – no clear vision

- Other legislation and recent bills continue to bring up issue of water policy

➤ 2009 USACE

Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future

Collaborative Regional Meetings

Water resources needs identified

- Unifying national water vision to guide water resources management
- Re-evaluate roles of government
- Improvements in monitoring and sharing of data, information and model integration
- Promote integrated water resources management for sustainability
- More Federal Funding Needed! (universal)

A National Water Vision - U.S. Is Not Alone

- World Water Vision – pilot programs turning national visions into action
 - South East Asia – National Water Visions
 - Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Viet Nam
- EU Water Framework
- 2009 WWC, World Water Forum
 - Sustainability (vision/desired conditions)
 - Integrated Water Resources Management

“Vision”

- Vivid description of desired outcome
- Paints a mental picture of target/future state
- High level perspective, above policy level
- Provides direction and guides activities

We all have some vision for our life.

Do We Need a National Vision for Integrated and Sustainable Water Resources?

- You can't decide on the journey until you know where you are going.
- Without a vision, planning and management actions are:
 - fragmented
 - unlikely to achieve desired end-states
 - planning, decisions and management will not be efficient or effective

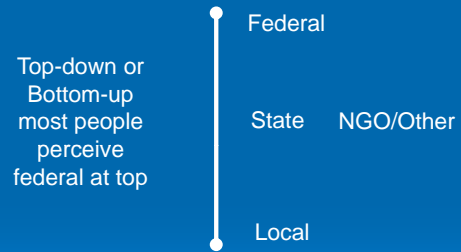
- Decades of experience with ad-hoc national water resources planning and management demonstrate the need for a national water resources vision
- Decades of analyses and reports consistently call for a national vision for water resources to more effectively and efficiently achieve desired outcomes
- Everyone has a vision - need to coalesce/bring together individual visions

National Water Resources Vision

How best to develop – open discussion

- National Vision identified in collaboration, local, state, federal desired outcomes
- Identification of participants
- Development of vision and consensus
- Organization for collaboration
Horizontal vs Vertical collaboration

Vertical Collaboration



Horizontal Collaboration



Identify Participants

Pool of Stakeholders



Water Resources Visions

- Clean Water Vision
 - Fishable, swimmable, drinkable water resources (Clean Water Act)
- Safe Drinking Water Act
 - Reliable, safe drinking water across the nation

Elegant visions, grasped by everyone

➤ Example from Regional Collaborative Meetings

Manage the Nation's water and related land resources holistically to provide groundwater and surface water of sufficient quality and in adequate supply to protect our natural systems and provide for potable supplies, agriculture, industry and recreation in a sustainable manner.

Collaboration and Vision

- Collaboration requires a mutual interest
- Even though water management responsibilities are divided across many agencies, organizations and levels, in many areas they share a common vision
- This common vision provides a basis for collaboration and progress toward mutually desired outcomes of mutual benefit

Summary

- More than 30 years of discussion, recognition and recommendations on the need for national water resources vision
- Vision requires collaboration - Horizontal process
- Water resources objectives will remain elusive without establishing a vision
- Over 7 years and 4 water policy dialogues the first thing expressed is:
“Where are we going?” A vision is needed!