



NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
February 26, 2008**

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Major U.S. Water Agencies Form New National Climate Alliance

Collaboration and improved research key to coping with climate change

United by the fact that climate change poses a major long-term challenge to delivering high-quality drinking water, eight of the nation's largest water agencies announced the formation of an unprecedented coalition, the Water Utility Climate Alliance (WUCA). The alliance will work to improve research into the impacts of climate change on water utilities, develop strategies for adapting to climate change and implement tactics to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Comprised of Denver Water, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Portland Water Bureau, San Diego County Water Authority, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Seattle Public Utilities and the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the WUCA members supply drinking water for more than 36 million people throughout the United States.

"Water utilities are among the first responders to the effects of climate change," said Susan Leal, general manager of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, which chairs the WUCA. "Our systems are facing risk due to diminishing snowpack, bigger storms, more frequent drought and rising sea levels. We need to be organized to respond to these risks — that's why we've formed this alliance."

Patricia Mulroy, general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, said, "Water agencies throughout the nation will invest hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure over the next 15 years alone, and those investments must be informed by climate projections that are as accurate as possible."

Emily Lloyd, commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, said, "We need the best possible research to enhance our understanding of how climate change will impact water supplies, precipitation patterns, hydrology and water quality."

In its first official act, the WUCA provided comment today on the "Summary of Revised Research Plan" prepared by the U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP).

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The WUCA identified several key research needs that would improve the drinking water industry's ability to develop strategies to cope with potential impacts of climate change. The WUCA is urging the CCSP, as well as all researchers and scientists in the climate-change field, to:

- Reduce the uncertainty in climate change projections by improving and refining global climate models and applying them at the regional or local level;
- Enhance the collection, maintenance and accessibility of information, making the data more useful for decision-making purposes;
- Ensure that water providers worldwide have access to consistent climate data;
- Develop decision-support tools for planning, decision-making and policy-making that can accommodate deep uncertainty and the potential for abrupt climate changes; and
- Coordinate international research efforts, particularly with those countries that are already experiencing the effects of climate change, such as Australia.

The CCSP integrates federal research on climate and global change. It is comprised of 13 federal agencies with climate change research responsibilities, including the Departments of Interior, Commerce, and Energy, NASA, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The CCSP's "Summary of Revised Research Plan" is available online at www.climate-science.gov/Library/stratplan2008/.

For more information about the WUCA, or to review comments of the "Summary of Revised Research Plan," visit www.sfwater.org.

The Water Utility Climate Alliance is dedicated to providing leadership and collaboration on climate-change issues affecting drinking water utilities by improving research, developing adaptation strategies and creating mitigation approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Water Utility Climate Alliance began meeting in late 2007 and includes the following members and their respective agencies:

Susan Leal, WUCA chair and general manager, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Chips Barry, general manager, Denver Water

Chuck Clarke, director, Seattle Public Utilities

Jeff Kightlinger, general manager, The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Emily Lloyd, commissioner, New York City Department of Environmental Protection

Patricia Mulroy, general manager, Southern Nevada Water Authority

David Shaff, administrator, Portland Water Bureau

Maureen Stapleton, general manager, San Diego County Water Authority

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