

Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 06-3

June 13, 2006
Sedona, Arizona

Regional and National Policies Regarding Global Climate Change

A. BACKGROUND

1. Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are rising and are projected to continue to increase. Although no state or region can unilaterally address climate change or emissions, numerous states and the western region have begun working together on new policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to influence national and international policy.
2. In recent years, the West has experienced very significant droughts across much of the region, reduced snow pack, altered precipitation patterns, severe forest and rangeland fires, warmer temperatures and forest diseases. Climate change and variability have contributed to these impacts. Although specific impacts are not fully predictable, climate change could have severe economic and environmental impacts on the West in coming decades, including effects on agriculture and tourism, infrastructure (including dams, roads, water and sewer), loss of coastal areas, changed fisheries and wildlife, water shortages, storm impacts, and soil erosion.
3. Countries around the world are working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In a 2005 statement, the United States National Academies of Science concluded, "the scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify taking prompt action." Eleven National Academies of Science from the major nations of the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, China, Russia, and others, have agreed that science supports the fact that climate change is occurring, is influenced by human activity, and presents risks that should be addressed through changed practices and preparation for changed conditions.
4. Appropriate action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Many of these actions could create significant economic benefit for the West, if the United States moves toward new energy sources and technologies that prefer domestic energy and carbon sequestration. The opportunities to deploy clean and renewable energy and energy efficiency are abundant in the West and may economically and environmentally benefit states by increasing energy efficiency, improving air quality, saving costs, providing jobs, increasing revenues, and reducing water pollution.
5. Some western states are engaged in climate change agreements that cross state borders, as well as policy within states. The experience from these projects could be useful to other Western Governors and throughout the Nation as we implement measures to address climate change.
6. The United States Congress has started to give serious consideration to national climate change policies. The Senate Energy Committee has dedicated committee hearings to the

issue and has developed research and policy options regarding the business case for a market-based emissions reduction program. The Senate and House have both begun work on general language calling for action.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors urge the President, Congress, the U.S. Department of State, and other federal agencies to include the interests and expertise of the states as part of any national debate on global climate change, including the reduction of greenhouse gases, to ensure fully coordinated policies.
2. Western Governors support a full and vigorous discussion, including all stakeholders, and consideration of all alternatives regarding the reduction and mitigation of greenhouse gases, adaptation policies and other global climate change measures.
3. Western Governors support coordinated international research on climate change. The Governors believe research should appropriately emphasize decision support, in order to engender informed discussion of climate change issues by decision makers, stakeholders, the media, and the general public. The Western Governors urge Congress and the Administration through the Climate Change Science Program to fund research for improving predictive capabilities for climate change and related impacts. Additionally, because of the complex climatology in the West, it is important that climate change modeling be conducted on a much finer resolution, e.g. watersheds and sub-watersheds.
4. The Governors recognize that climate prediction is complex and that the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of long-term climate change are difficult to project. The Governors recommend that policies related to long-term climate change should incorporate results from ongoing scientific research.
5. Federal agencies should invest in research programs to study climate change impacts and address scientific questions relevant to the West. Western Governors support the implementation of greenhouse gas mitigation tools such as carbon sequestration that have broad public support and potential economic benefit and can help address the unique conditions of the West.
6. Western Governors support the development of local, state, regional, and national programs to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that: (1) is consistent with the findings of scientific research; (2) will not significantly harm the United States economy; and (3) will encourage comparable action by other nations that are major trading partners and key contributors to global emissions.
7. Western Governors support national, regional, and state-level policies on global climate change that are consistent with efforts to develop cost-effective alternative energy sources and more efficient use of energy in mobile and stationary sources.
8. Western Governors recognize the need to be able to proactively respond to short-term climate change and variability, e.g. drought, forest fires, significant precipitation events, and extreme heat events.

9. Western Governors recognize the need for collaboration among Western states to develop climate change policies that consider the unique conditions of the West and provide consistent approaches to recognize and give credit for actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Western Governors support state and local efforts to address climate change and believe that such greenhouse gas reductions achieved under these programs should be recognized, including if and when a future national regime is adopted. Development of a voluntary registry for greenhouse gas emissions would assist sources that are interested in documenting and tracking their reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.
10. States maintain various water-related plans including state water plans, watershed plans, state drought plans, reservoir management plans, and flood plans. The federal government should provide support and cooperation so that these plans can be consistently and accurately expanded or enhanced to include climate change scenarios, especially within the context of watershed planning.
11. Western Governors support market-based policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the most cost-effective manner.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Western Governors' Association shall post this resolution to its web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
2. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with the appropriate federal, regional and state agencies in implementing this resolution.

Originally adopted in 1997 as Policy Resolution 97 - 002, and readopted as 00-014 and 03-07.