



June 24, 2022

Members of the Water Sub-Cabinet
Tanya Trujillo—Co-Chair
Radhika Fox—Co-Chair

Sent via email

Dear Ms. Trujillo and Ms. Fox:

The Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP), the National Water Supply Alliance (NWSA), and the Western States Water Council (WSWC) appreciate the participation of the Water Sub-Cabinet agencies during our recent Washington DC Roundtable on April 7, 2022. The States, interstate commissions, regional and local water management agencies represented by our three organizations truly appreciate the strong partnership we've enjoyed with federal agencies over the decades, and the annual Roundtable embodies that relationship.

The questions posed to the federal agency representatives during the session were targeted to address issues covered during the earlier two days of the Roundtable. Attendees from our three organizations were disappointed that there was no opportunity for direct interaction or Q&A. Our members are leaders in national water policy and state/federal coordination and wish to elevate our interactions with the Water Sub-Cabinet. This follow-up letter is designed to identify some of the general areas of interest that we were unable to raise following the scripted portion of the meeting, as well as to propose a path forward to improve dialog between the Water Sub-Cabinet agencies and our three organizations.

While there are a multitude of water management topics which have both a federal, state and local nexus, our top priorities that we believe would benefit from being addressed in a concerted, coordinated fashion are the following:

Drought — Federal drought programs, such as NIDIS and relationships to Agency Climate Action Plans and efforts of the National Drought Resiliency Partnership (NDRP)

Our members are very interested in the planned roll-out of the provisions of the Administration's Climate Action Plan. Many of the individual work plan items reach beyond the jurisdiction of a single federal agency. How will efforts undertaken as outlined in the Climate Action Plan be coordinated? How will alignment with State Water Plans be assured?

Our members note that the NDRP is named the "National", not Federal, Drought Resiliency Partnership and was envisioned to have participation outside the federal family. How does the NRDP, in conjunction with the Water Sub-cabinet, propose to include non-federal participation?

During his remarks at the April 7th session, Roger Pulwarty mentioned tying the work of NOAA/NIDIS with the Climate Action Plan and with state and tribal drought plans. Our members

would like to hear more details about this effort and work together on this important priority, as well as how the federal agencies might align their water programs and policies to reduce duplication, streamline processes, and generally make government more efficient.

Infrastructure Spending: State Revolving Funds, alignment with State water plan priorities, implementation of funding directed to underserved communities

We understand there will be a focus within the SRF programs to prioritize underserved communities and note that our members are already embracing such efforts. In the interest of efficient coordination and implementation, how will alignment be assured to work cooperatively and effectively with State partners? How are States and interstate basin commissions involved with determining the priorities for funding directed to disadvantaged and underserved communities? How will alignment with State Water Plans be assured? Additionally, how will implementation plans for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act balance the needs of aging infrastructure/deferred maintenance backlog with new projects and initiatives? In some instances, addressing long overdue maintenance, repairs, and replacement is more cost effective and timely.

We appreciate that several of the Water Sub-Cabinet agencies meet at regular intervals with the state agencies that are implementing programs related to that specific agency and we appreciate these working relationships. However, our memberships see a communications gap in understanding how the interagency federal Water Sub-Cabinet members' internal coordination will also benefit States, interstate commissions, regional and local water management agencies, and other stakeholders. It's not that we doubt that the Sub-Cabinet is making progress and achieving commendable internal coordination; it's that we, as partners, have not experienced, been apprised of nor directly engaged as a partner in that coordination and implementation.

Accordingly, it's our hope that the leadership of the Water Sub-Cabinet agencies sees the value of developing closer participation and implementation relationship with our stakeholders, to ensure that the huge investment planned under the Infrastructure bill is delivered in the most efficient and beneficial ways possible. Ultimately, cost-effective successful implementation of many of these critical assistance programs will depend on filling this coordination gap.

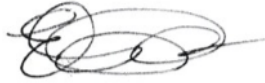
As a solution, we propose initiating a reoccurring, scheduled meeting between the Water Sub-cabinet Principles, our three organizations and perhaps other water policy-related organizations as appropriate to improve federal/state coordination and implementation of these and other relevant water initiatives. We suggest a semi-annual meeting schedule with topics tailored specific to each agency's jurisdiction, as we believe there are ample topics in which we all hold a shared interest to warrant a 90-minute meeting. These meetings would also be a good opportunity for the Water Sub-cabinet to provide updates and for the Water Sub-cabinet agencies to hear from our stakeholders on how implementation can be improved and instituted as true partnerships. If the Water Sub-cabinet could elucidate their highest priorities to the States, and if those priorities aligned with the priorities of the States, a strong implementation effort would result.

Our memberships enjoy a cooperative working relationship with the federal agencies represented in WestFAST. We suggest working through WestFAST to set up our first semi-annual meeting. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any one of our organizations in the meantime should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Tony Willardson
WSWC Executive Director



Beth Callaway
ICWP Executive
Director



Dave Mitamura
NWSA Executive
Director

CC: Principal Members of the Water Sub-Cabinet
National Drought Resilience Partnership member agencies
WestFAST members