

**Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 09-3**

Regional and National Policies Regarding Global Climate Change

A. BACKGROUND

1. Atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are rising due to human activities including land use changes and the combustion of fossil fuels, and are projected to continue to increase. Increasing concentrations have had and will continue to have marked effects on global climate. 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. Climate change will 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 systems), 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 its 2007 assessment report the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change declared warming of the global climate system is “unequivocal” and that it is “very likely” due to human caused increases in greenhouse gas pollutants. There is widespread global agreement that climate change presents risks that should be addressed through changed practices and preparation for changed conditions.
4. Appropriate actions are needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Many of these actions could create significant economic benefit for the West, as the United States moves toward new energy sources and technologies that favor domestic resources 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 providing jobs, increasing revenues, improving air quality, increasing energy efficiency, saving costs, conserving water and reducing water pollution.
5. Western states are developing and implementing greenhouse gas reduction policies and some are engaged in climate change agreements that cross state borders. A number of these policies are being developed in conjunction with Canadian provinces. 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 government is working to enact national climate change policy. On May 19, 2009, President Obama announced a historic national policy that will reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and improve fuel economy for all new cars and trucks

sold in the United States. On May 21, 2009, the House Energy and Commerce Committee reported the American Clean Energy and Security Act calling for electric utilities to meet 20% of their electricity demand through renewable energy sources and energy efficiency by 2020 and the establishment of a national cap-and-trade program to reduce carbon emissions from major U.S. sources by 17% by 2020 and over 80% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors urge Congress and the President to act decisively to create a national policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Such a policy should be developed in a manner that: (1) is consistent with the findings of scientific research; (2) encourages job growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship; (3) combines market-based and other policies to reduce emissions in the most cost-effective manner; (4) recognizes and encourages local and state action to reduce emissions; and (5) will encourage comparable action by other nations that are major trading partners and key contributors to global emissions.
2. The Western Governors urge Congress and the President to form national strategies that enhance state authority and leverage partnerships between national, state, tribal, and local governments, build on states' expertise, and encourage states to continue development and implementation of a range of policies. Both market and complementary policies will be necessary to most effectively achieve emission reduction goals. States are uniquely well-positioned to implement policies that overcome market barriers, mitigate costs to consumers and protect vulnerable populations, accelerate new technologies and engage solutions from farms and forests, and otherwise build on the unique strengths and resources of the United States' diverse regions. States should be encouraged, through the use of emission allowance value from a national cap-and-trade program, to adopt such policies that reduce emissions and accelerate technology to the benefit of the nation.
3. The Western Governors urge Congress and the President to recognize and encourage state action in any national market-based emission reduction policy. Where state, tribal, and local actions achieve greater reductions than national policy alone, a national strategy should ensure the integrity of these reductions and not allow compensating increases elsewhere in the country. Such a policy should protect our national interests by supporting state initiative and avoiding unfair competitive advantages and leakage.
4. Western Governors support national, regional, state-level, and tribal policies on global climate change that are consistent with efforts to develop cost-effective clean energy sources and more efficient use of energy in mobile and stationary sources. 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.
5. Western Governors support national, regional, state-level, and tribal policies on global climate change which comprehensively address transportation emissions with a multi-faceted approach focusing on vehicle emission standards, low carbon fuels, and land use and transportation planning.

6. 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.
7. Western Governors recognize that impacts of climate change are presently observed in Western states, and anticipate greater and different impacts in the future. Adaptation to climate impacts will require a wide range of responses and choosing best strategies will require new information. Adaptation decisions will require highly local knowledge and implementation. Local, state, tribal, and regional organizations are uniquely qualified to implement decisions. The federal government should invest sufficient resources to develop the localized modeling and assessment tools necessary to predict and respond to climate changes and associated impacts, and to develop decision tools for state and local governments to assist in state and local adaptation efforts.
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. Western Governors support creating at the federal and regional level the information, organization, and funding necessary to proactively respond rather than react to these increasingly frequent events.
9. 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.
10. Federal agencies should invest in research programs to study climate change impacts and address scientific questions relevant to the West at the regional, state, and local levels. 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 President 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.
11. Given the global nature of climate change, Western Governors encourage both the U.S. government and the international community to recognize the important role of sub-national governments in crafting responses to climate change. The Governors support explicit inclusion of this role in any international agreements reached, including under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
12. 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.

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.