



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****
January 12, 2009

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AMWA Calls For Passage of Climate/Water Research Bill

Washington, D.C. – The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) today urged the United States Senate to quickly pass legislation containing the text of the “SECURE Water Act,” a bill that seeks to improve federal research into the impacts of climate change on America’s water resources.

“Water resource managers in many parts of the country are already beginning to face water quality and quantity obstacles that may be linked to climate change, but at this point there is not enough reliable data available to help water systems make plans based on accurate long-term projections,” said AMWA Executive Director Diane VanDe Hei. “The SECURE Water Act will be a good first step toward addressing this problem, as it will increase regionalized climate/water research, authorize new adaptation programs, and make grants available to help water systems increase water efficiency and conservation efforts.”

Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) introduced the “Science and Engineering to Comprehensively Understand and Responsibly Enhance (SECURE) Water Act” in 2007. The text of the measure is included in an omnibus public lands bill (S. 22) that the Senate is currently debating. A final vote on the bill is possible sometime this week.

“Quick action by the Senate on the SECURE Water Act would demonstrate that climate change legislation is high on the agenda of the 111th Congress,” VanDe Hei said. “Drinking water systems can’t afford to wait until the well runs dry to respond to climate change, and programs included in the SECURE Water Act will help utilities obtain the data necessary to make informed adaptation plans.”

Under the legislation, the Bureau of Reclamation would initiate a climate change adaptation program to study and address water shortages and other climate change-related impacts on water users. The Bureau would also be authorized to offer grants to states and localities within its jurisdictional area to construct improvements that increase water conservation and efficiency or to develop advanced treatment technologies that boost water supplies. Other portions of the bill require an expansion of the National Streamflow Information Program, the development of a systematic groundwater-monitoring program, the formation of a water use and availability assessment program, and the creation of an intra-governmental panel to connect the members of the scientific community and water managers who can work together to improve water availability forecasts and to implement adaptation strategies.

“Congress must recognize that climate change will have a profound impact on America’s water resources, and the SECURE Water Act represents a good starting point for a federal response,” VanDe Hei said. “I thank Senator Bingaman for his leadership on this issue, and urge the Senate to pass this important legislation without delay.”

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The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies is an organization of the largest publicly owned drinking water suppliers in the United States.

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