

Abstract for Water and Health: Where Science Meets Policy Conference

Managing Water as One:
Breaking Down the Silos to Advance a Sustainable National Water Policy

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Imagine a world where water is viewed, managed, and valued as one resource. A world where the silo thinking that has kept clean water, drinking water, stormwater, and water reuse interests segregated erodes – and a movement toward meeting future challenges on a watershed basis, with a focus on sustainability and green cities, emerges in its place. Changing the water paradigm – this is the vision of the Clean Water America Alliance (Alliance).

The Alliance would like to give a presentation on its *National Dialogue* series with a focus on the conclusions reached at these *National Dialogues*, as well as how the Alliance will utilize these reports to help address the challenges facing water sustainability for future generations.

The Alliance believes that the nation must re-evaluate how it uses and manages its water resources if it is to continue to have a reliable source of water. To that end, the Alliance initiated a series of *National Dialogues* calling for an integrated national water policy focused on sustainability. The first *National Dialogue*, held in September 2009, brought together nearly 30 of the leading water policy experts from around the country, not as representatives of their organizations, but as individuals willing to share their expertise and perspectives in searching for common ground and concrete solutions.

Participants concluded that the U.S. faces increasing challenges that threaten its ability to provide adequate supplies of clean water to meet its competing demands. The report from the first *National Dialogue* concluded that population growth, climate change, aging infrastructure, and new regulatory requirements all present complex but interwoven challenges that are best addressed through an integrated national policy.

The second *National Dialogue* “What’s Water Worth,” held in March 2010, brought together over 40 of the nation’s leading experts in water policy, including representatives from state water authorities, Capitol Hill, the federal government, municipal water and wastewater agencies, engineering firms, academia, energy, industry, green infrastructure interests, agriculture, and conservation.

Participants engaged in a wide ranging exploration of the personal, social, industrial, agricultural, ecological, and institutional perspectives on the value of water and identified the hurdles and problems inherent in valuing the many different uses of water by many different users. Participants agreed that the seriousness of these challenges requires the development of a new approach to water management – where we think differently, and holistically, about the problem and the solutions. New partnerships,

which seek to encourage the best from every organization, which can maximize innovation and creativity, yet provide a coherent vision and effective resources, must become the norm.

The Alliance plans to hold a third *National Dialogue* in Los Angeles in September 2010. This third *National Dialogue* will focus on how to manage water as one resource and break down the silos between drinking water, stormwater, wastewater, groundwater, and water reuse interests.

The Alliance plans to use the *National Dialogue* series to help develop a blueprint for a sustainable and integrated national water policy that balances our commitment to social, environmental, and economic needs.