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## Advocacy Position Statement

### **Clean Water Policy**

#### Statement of Purpose

The American Public Works Association (APWA) seeks to inform elected officials, regulators, policy-makers and decision-makers and the public at-large of its stated position on clean water.

#### Statement of Position

APWA is committed to protecting and improving water quality. APWA believes that goal can be achieved by following the sound principles of: Watershed Planning and Management, Priority Setting, Financing to Meet Water Quality Needs, Research, and Improving Water Quality through Sound Science.

#### Background and Rationale

Protecting the world's surface water and groundwater is essential for public health, wide diversity of biological communities, and quality of life. Water supply must meet our present needs while ensuring the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable usage of water, which is fundamental to prosperity and progress, requires protection of all natural resources from activities perilous to water quality. While water quality protection programs succeed in many parts of the world, global water quality continues to be challenged by population growth, urbanization, industrial and commercial activities, agricultural practices and other aspects of modern life.

#### **Watershed Planning and Management**

APWA supports the watershed approach to protecting and restoring water quality. The watershed approach stems from the knowledge that all ecosystems are linked together. Watershed management is a method of decision-making to protect and sustain all natural resources – uplands, wetlands, surface water and groundwater – affecting water quality within common, hydrologically defined geographic areas. The watershed approach includes all citizens of a watershed in establishing priorities and developing plans for water protection in that region. Local government agencies, businesses and residents in a watershed should participate in setting regional environmental priorities, aiming for the highest practicable degrees of water quality improvement. Inclusion of concerned parties

in a successful watershed program demands comprehensive public education on protecting and enhancing watersheds.

### **Priority Setting**

APWA supports a priority setting process that allows governments and watershed managers enhanced flexibility in scheduling and standard-setting within the context of economic, technical and social capabilities. A priority setting framework must support water quality managers in using appropriate data and tools, promoting inclusive resource protection, conducting economic and risk analyses, considering cross-media impacts and accounting for regional growth. Water quality priorities and solutions must be established regionally to best address water quality impairment from local and outside sources. The general public should collaborate in priority setting with engineers, scientists and other experts to ensure long-term support for and implementation of water quality programs. Priorities should be set to expand water recycling and to protect natural resources.

### **Improving Water Quality through Sound Science**

APWA supports the use of sound scientific information in all programs dedicated to solving water quality issues. The benefits of water quality protection are maximized when all components of such initiatives have sound scientific basis and a clear rationale. New water resource efforts and restructured water quality initiatives should be supported by the most comprehensive and current scientific information and assessments. Goals, standards, and strategies should be evaluated regularly to incorporate the most recent scientific information and analyses. Scientific knowledge should be used to protect the environment and to develop a sustainable balance of natural resources. Water quality protection efforts must promote problem resolution and enhance pollution prevention, while considering the beneficial uses of each water body individually and the watershed as a whole.

### **Research**

APWA has found that increased research and development to solve environmentally related problems faced by local governments is a pressing national need. APWA supports programs to stimulate research and development to meet this need. APWA also supports development and dissemination of both basic and applied research on water issues through financial assistance, program aid, practical field demonstrations, and publication of peer-reviewed research. Research is the foundation of scientific and technical knowledge on water quality and the global environment. New and expanded research efforts are essential to our understanding of water resources and of human stresses on them, to technological innovation, and to development of new cost-effective approaches to enhance water quality. Reliable data is necessary to meet the global demand for high-quality water. Research results should be employed by all parties involved in water quality protection. APWA endorses conducting such research under the financial umbrella of the federal government, e.g. the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through cooperative agreements with organizations such as the Water Environment Research Foundation.

## **Financing to Meet Water Quality Needs**

Adequate funding for watershed management and infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement is vital for sustained water quality. All elements of clean water efforts receiving funding should be sustainable and responsive to citizens and to the environment. APWA supports equitable distribution of clean water costs among all parties benefiting from the resource, financial assistance for clean water programs, partnerships between government and the private sector, and government funding of water quality programs as a duty to all citizens. Financing methods should be innovative and free of burdensome regulation or onerous administrative requirements. Federal grant funding, as opposed to revolving loans, should be emphasized to meet unfunded federal mandates.

## **Effective Management and Infrastructure Sustainability**

APWA members take a lead role in the effective management of facilities protecting water quality. The keys to good management and sustainable infrastructure include: programs to further improve the skills of water quality professionals; funding for infrastructure improvements and for regulatory compliance and enforcement; pollution prevention; responsible management of residuals; public participation in decision making; and proper planning, construction, and maintenance of water quality facilities to maximize long term efficiency and ensure water quality protection. Community and industrial water quality facilities also should consider adopting voluntary management standards to protect all water resources. The mission of the world's water quality professionals is to provide the highest quality water while acting as a partner with and good neighbor to the public.

### Sponsor

Water Resources Management Committee