



washington dc update

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

August 12, 2009

Note:
Limited information is available on the CEQ at its website:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/>



The White House Council on Environmental Quality [CEQ] is a growing presence in terms of the management of water resources. In just the past few months, CEQ has taken over the lead role from the Corps of Engineers in revising “Principals and Guidelines” for the management of water projects and expanded them to a wide range of Federal agencies. CEQ is also at work preparing to re-issue an Executive Order on floodplain management dating back to the Carter Administration. This revised order to extend Federal jurisdiction to the 500 year floodplain. All Federal agencies and the WESTCAS membership will be impacted.

But as we talk more and more about CEQ, many are asking; “who are these guys?” Here is a brief primer on CEQ:

- CEQ is a part of the Executive Office of the President of the United States.
- It was created as a part of the NEPA authorization in 1969.
- Its duties were further expanded by the Environmental Quality Improvement Act of 1970.
- CEQ’s offices are directly across the street from the White House on the West side of Lafayette Square. We suspect that many WESTCAS members have probably had meetings in these offices over the year.

The plans and intentions of CEQ to re-define and extend Federal authority over water resources have generated concern among the water community. But we continue to believe that it would be a serious mistake for WESTCAS to simply be “against” everything that CEQ is trying to do. We need to reach out to the Executive Branch and bring our expertise to bear as these rules and directives are being created.

The newly installed head of CEQ is Nancy Sutley. She came to this post after serving as Deputy Mayor for Energy and Environment for the City of Los Angeles where her duties included representing the City of Los Angeles on the Metropolitan Water District’s Board of Directors and service on the MET Legislative Committee. Her service on the MET Board and MET Committees brought her into regular contact with Tim Quinn while he was still on the MET staff. Given this background it is very safe to assume that Ms. Sutley is very well informed with regard to western water issues.

A recent headline in the Manchester Guardian described Ms. Sutley in the following terms:

“Chairperson of CEO defines her mission as translating Obama’s green agenda across government agencies, preserving natural heritage, and putting science at the heart of decision-making.”

Given this mission, Ms. Sutley and her CEQ are moving in an entirely comprehensible fashion with regard to issues such as “P&G”, floodplain management, and the rest.

WESTCAS members should reflect that some of the top Obama Administration appointees with regard to water and water resources do in fact bring a great store of knowledge of western water issues to their new duties. This includes Ms. Sutley, Pete Silva as Assistant Administrator for Water at USEPA, and Mike Connor as Commissioner of Reclamation.

WESTCAS is actively reaching out to CEQ and inviting their participation at the fall conference in Tucson. We are hopeful that they will be able to join us.

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