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Testimony of the Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS)

Submitted (for the record) to the Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee, Interior & Related Agencies

Regarding FY09 Environmental Protection Agency Budget

April 25, 2008

The Western Coalition of Arid States (WESTCAS) is submitting this testimony regarding the Presidents FY 2009 budget request for the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

WESTCAS is a coalition of approximately 125 water and wastewater districts, cities and towns and professional organizations focused on water quality and water quantity issues in the States of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas. Our mission is to work with Federal, State and Regional water quality and quantity agencies to promote scientifically-sound laws, regulations, appropriations and policies that protect public health and the environment of the arid West.

Protection of the public health and the environment is a high priority of citizens of the United States from all walks of life. As water services providers and professionals we hear from our citizens every day regarding the importance of safe drinking water, protecting habitat and wildlife and being stewards of the environment. The projects we work on and activities we conduct are driven by rules, programs and policies that have been developed due to past environmental legislation and appropriations that have accompanied them. As examples, we acknowledge the successes of the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, the Resource Conservation Recovery Act and others. As the lead agency for developing and implementing the programs and policies needed to achieve the goals of environmental legislation, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducts research, establishes monitoring and reporting programs, establishes mechanisms to enforce rules and allocates funds to assist the regulated community in meeting requirements.

The Voice of Water Quality in the Arid West

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The arid West is the fastest growing region in the United States. The combined challenges of constructing and maintaining the infrastructure and

treatment facilities necessary to meet new demands for water and wastewater services, rehabilitating and replacing aging infrastructure, and meeting increasingly stringent regulations will be insurmountable without local, state, and federal commitments to financing the necessary infrastructure. WESTCAS, is concerned about the 19 % (\$134 million) decrease in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund from the FY 2008 enacted budget, being proposed in the President's FY 2009 Budget. Increased construction costs have further eroded the value of the funding levels. WESTCAS supports funding the CWSRF to greater than the FY 2008 level.

Water Pollution Control (Clean Water Act Section 106) Grants provide funding for states to carry out many programs including the development of water quality standards and Total Maximum Daily Loads. It also provides funding for monitoring activities. WESTCAS supports funding these programs at no lower than the FY 2008 proposed levels rather than the FY 2008 enacted levels. WESTCAS supports funding for enhanced monitoring activities, as this monitoring provides the basic data for the water quality standards and assessment programs.

Primary enforcement authority for safe drinking water and clean water programs has been delegated by EPA to most of the WESTCAS states. With severe budget constraints, the ability of state agencies to respond to existing and emerging public health and environmental issues is becoming more challenging. Inspections, permitting and enforcement activities will be adversely impacted by decreases in federal support. Without additional funding, inaccurate EPA databases that are critical for evaluating compliance and providing information to the public will continue to hinder EPA's ability to enforce regulations, create potential conflict between the regulatory agencies and the regulated community, and lower public confidence in both utilities and regulatory agencies. WESTCAS supports increasing state grant programs from the FY 2008 levels in order to maintain regulatory programs and to bolster public confidence by eliminating inaccuracies in EPA's databases.

WESTCAS has long been a proponent of sound science in developing water quality standards, especially for ephemeral and effluent dependent waters in the arid West. Water quality standards should be based on the characteristics of the specific aquatic communities that exist in the water bodies and public health-based uses of those waters. Therefore, WESTCAS is concerned about the almost \$3 million reduction in the Clean Water Research Program and requests that those funds be restored.

There has been recent media attention regarding pharmaceutically active compounds, personal care products and endocrine disrupting compounds in the nations' waters. Response to the news articles by water utilities has been challenging in the face of little information on environmental impacts and especially human health effects. In the West,

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water supply and drought plans continue to grow increasingly dependent on the direct and indirect reuse of reclaimed water, making the need for additional research on the health effects of these compounds more urgent. WESTCAS requests that the approximate \$3.6 million in reductions to research on human health and ecosystems and toxics review

and prevention associated with endocrine disruptors in the proposed FY 2009 budget be restored and enhanced to include research associated with long-term exposure of humans to very low levels of pharmaceuticals and personal care products. Funding for the development of analytical methods to accurately and reliably determine the concentrations of these compounds is also critical. Finally, if health effects are identified, research is needed on treatment technologies capable of reducing these compounds to safe levels.

WESTCAS appreciates the difficulty that Congress faces in providing funding for the many needs of the nation and appreciates your consideration of these requests. We hope you agree that we as a nation cannot afford to compromise protection of public health and the environment in response to fluctuating economies.

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