



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR - 1 2012

Ms. Olga Morales
Chair, National Drinking Water Advisory Council
Rural Development Specialist
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
P.O. Box 1223
Dona Ana, New Mexico 88032

OFFICE OF
WATER

Dear Ms. Morales:

Thank you for the January 11, 2011, letter to Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), on behalf of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC), in which the Council expresses support for implementing the recommendations in the accompanying Climate Ready Water Utilities report. The Administrator has forwarded your letter to me for response. While the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water has met with you regarding your final report, I apologize for the delay in our written response.

We value the Council's findings and recommendations and appreciate the effort members have put forward in preparing the report. EPA agrees that the report will assist drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems across the nation to increase their resilience to climate change consequences and impacts. We value your feedback because it will assist EPA in identifying how water sector utilities can become "Climate Ready."

In your letter you recommend that EPA approach the implementation of the report's recommendations in a holistic, integrated, and sustainable manner. We have adopted this approach in the development and implementation of all Climate Ready Water Utilities (CRWU) efforts and EPA will continue to implement this approach with ongoing and new CRWU activities, subject to the availability of resources. A number of our current CRWU initiative efforts are identified below.

EPA has developed our Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool (CREAT) software, available at EPA's website, which addresses Recommendation 4 of the NDWAC CRWU report (*i.e., build on and strengthen advanced decision support models and tools to support utility climate change efforts*). Version 1.0 of CREAT assists drinking water and wastewater utilities in assessing their risk to potential climate change impacts and in developing adaptation strategies to respond to these impacts. In addition to evaluating risk at a utility, the tool also contains regional climate profiles that allow the user to become better informed of potential climate impacts and how these impacts may impinge on their operations. We are now working with stakeholders, including members of the NDWAC CRWU working group, on the development of Version 2.0 of CREAT to improve upon its scenario-based planning, extreme events, and energy management capabilities.

To address Recommendation 7 of the report (*i.e., improve access to and dissemination of easy-to-understand and locally relevant climate information*), EPA has constructed a Climate Ready Water Utilities Toolbox. This searchable database contains climate-related resources that assists users at all stages of the planning and decision making process (e.g., assists users by raising general awareness and implementing mitigation and adaptation strategies). The toolbox includes relevant and informative publications and reports, links to climate tools and models, and information on climate-related activities in government, academia, and the water sector.

Your recommendations also identify the need to work collaboratively with federal, state, and local government climate programs. To commence dialogue on this matter, EPA has made the Climate Ready Water Utilities report available to all partners on its website. There is much to be gained by continuing to build on coordination, collaboration, and information sharing efforts across the federal government. The scope of climate change impacts is certainly broader than the water sector. Therefore, coordinating with others will prove to be an effective and efficient method to approach climate programs. This is particularly true when considering your recommendation that EPA coordinate with federal partners to integrate climate change considerations into business-as-usual activities. Integrating climate change impact considerations into programs such as sustainable infrastructure, effective utility management, and capacity development is a useful suggestion and, in fact, EPA has initiated work in this area. EPA continues to explore the potential for other outlets of collaboration and coordination with all other partners. That is, increased coordination across the government will continue to be a priority when implementing Climate Ready Water Utilities activities and will allow EPA to better integrate climate concerns into its existing programs in the most effective manner possible.

In another section of your transmittal letter you reference the Adaptive Response Framework crafted to address the first part of the working group's charge: "to develop the attributes of a climate ready water utility." The steps described in the Adaptive Response Framework provide a logical and comprehensive approach for drinking water and wastewater utilities to respond to the potential impacts of climate change that may impact their mission and operation. This past summer our CRWU team met with members of the NDWAC CRWU working group, along with other stakeholders, to discuss implementation of the Adaptive Response Framework concept. Moving forward, EPA plans to use this framework in concert with the 11 findings and the 12 recommendations of the report to drive and enhance our CRWU efforts.

Thank you again for the hard work on this effort. EPA appreciates the broad perspectives Council members bring to issues that are important to the Agency and the drinking water and wastewater communities. If you have further suggestions or questions, please contact Cynthia Dougherty, Director of EPA's Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, at (202) 564-3750.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy K. Stoner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "S".

Nancy K. Stoner
Acting Assistant Administrator