

3rd National Dialogue Nets Action List

In letters to the U.S. president, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate majority leader, and state and territorial governors, the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) reported the conclusions of its Third National Water Resources Policy Dialogue and urged them to address the nation's growing and severe water challenges.

The two-day meeting, held in January, brought together more than 150 water experts from across the nation to identify issues that needed to be brought to the attention of governments. It particularly focused on reconciling contradictory water policies, improving collaboration, and broadening the role of science in policy decisions, priorities identified during the first two Dialogues in 2002 and 2005.

The letters note a strong perception among meeting participants that national water actions should arise from the state level and be backed by appropriate support from the federal government. They urge immediate action to:

- address the urgent requirement for a national assessment of water resources needs;
- establish broad principles for water management that can be translated into policies that clearly define the responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments and the public with respect to water and the goals and objectives that would establish a blueprint for future actions;
- better coordinate water resources activities among federal agencies and congressional committees;
- promote planning based on watershed rather than political boundaries; and
- ensure that scientific knowledge

about water is available to all, clearly presented, and fully considered in making decisions on key water issues.

As in prior Dialogues, participants engaged in a voting process to identify areas that best represented the group's concerns. Broad areas of agreement emerged regarding, in essence, who (the presidential administration, Congress, states, the private sector, and water resources professionals) needs to do what to improve water policy. At the lower levels, states need to form or empower water basin councils to take an active role in watershed management. The private sector needs to explore, develop, and push for ways to bring market-based approaches to bear on water resources decisions. And all water resources professionals must communicate better with decision makers and the public, particularly by providing results and clearly explaining their implications.

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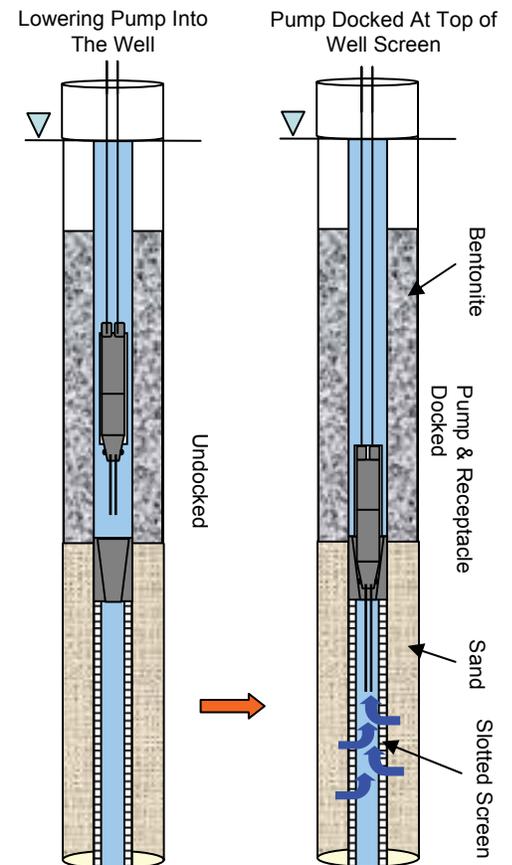
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