

Beyond Stationarity: Building the Center for Change

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and water managers are developing smart, effective responses to climate change impacts on water, this work is fragmented.

Addressing the unprecedented shift brought by changing climate patterns requires a fundamental rethinking of how the West's water is stored and delivered, ecosystems are protected, a healthy agricultural economy is sustained, and

Central to the Carpe Diem project's work is engaging western water leaders to assess opportunities for new solutions and discover where alliances can be built. This includes holding "convenings," where people with diverse and often conflicting interests are brought together to talk about issues, explore concerns, think about options, discover common goals, and put forth ideas without any formal commitment to them. From such meetings, the project begins to frame equitable and sustainable actions.

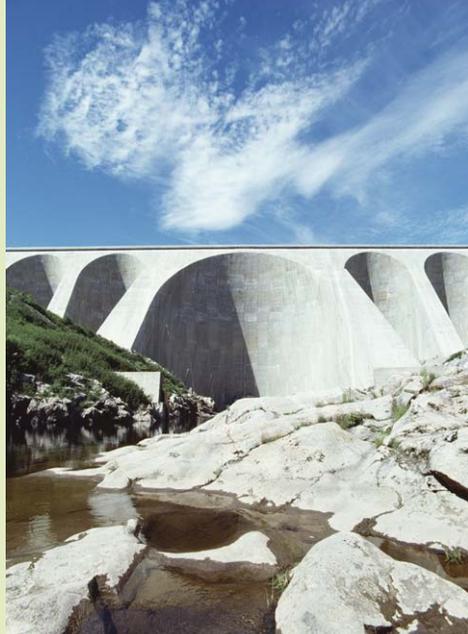
To date, convening topics have addressed the role of storage (existing and new), protection of headwater systems, the evolving role of the federal government, and addressing the vulnerability of critical ecosystems and low-income communities to the impacts of climate change. The Carpe Diem project's goal is not to advocate a particular policy, but to facilitate productive discussions that could lead to new policy, best practices, and basin management, and more effective state and federal actions.

As Ron Sims, Exloco board member and executive of King County, Washington, recently commented, "Climate change forces reality upon us: we are all connected and no solo acts will do the job at hand. We must move forward together with the will and vision to take risks."

Creating the next generation of water policy and management—federal, state and local—requires that we keep our eyes on the prize and our feet in the rivers. We welcome your involvement.

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Visit www.carpediemproject.org

Reference.....
Milly, P.C.D., J. Betancourt, M. Falkenmark, and others, 2008. Stationarity is dead: Whither water management? *Science*, 319(5863): 573-574.



"Stationarity is dead." A report published in *Science* last year (Milly and others, 2008) stated that stationarity—the idea that natural systems fluctuate within an unchanging envelope of variability—can no longer "serve as the central, default assumption" for water management in an era of climate change. The authors wrote, "Finding a suitable successor [to stationarity] is crucial for human adaptation to changing climate."

As goes the science, so go policy, practices, law, and management. We are all well-acquainted with the problems with water policy in the West: inadequate basin-wide planning; stovepipe management, disconnects between growth policy and water use, outdated laws and compacts, and inequitable allocations for ecosystems and poor communities. Policy stationarity—the blind adherence to old courses of action—will no longer work in the era of climate change.

But stacked up against any fundamental shift in management, policy, and law is over one hundred years of organizational tradition and entrenched political interests.

The West's water is linked across regions and states by watersheds and infrastructure. It also is fractured by myriad public agencies, compacts, and federal and state laws. A change on one part of a watershed does not ensure change on the entire watershed. And while many NGOs, sustainable community advocates,

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all people can have access to adequate supplies of clean water. Creating a new framework for using and managing water in the West requires a systems perspective and actions that address the interconnected parts of the whole.

Moving Forward

In 2007, the nonprofit Exloco and a group of western water leaders launched "Carpe Diem – Western Water & Climate Change." This project is based on the determination that climate change is an external driver of reform that will so disrupt the status quo that a fundamental shift is inevitable, creating the catalyst for changes in water management that have been under discussion for decades. It builds on and connects current work to develop a pragmatic, common-ground, West-wide framework to address climate change impacts on western water supply and ecosystems by developing joint strategies, projects, and best practices. The goal is to create an initial shared platform and action plan among key stakeholders and decision makers by 2010 for science-based and equitable adaptation strategies.