



*pathfinding in the new West*

## **Carpe Diem - Western Water & Climate Change**

Project Convening: November 30, 2007, Seattle, WA

Convening Summary

January 10, 2008

### **I. Summary and Convening Purpose**

The November 30, 2007 the **Carpe Diem - Western Water & Climate Change** project brought together 45 key stakeholders and lead decision makers from around the Western United States to begin a conversation and to find answers to:

- Is there an opportunity to build common agendas to respond to climate change impacts on western water?
- If yes, what might some of those common agendas look like?
- What would we need to know and do next?

As Ron Sims, King County (WA) Executive stated in his opening remarks: *"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."*

During the day-long convening, participants first heard from Ron Sims about the precedent setting climate mitigation and adaptation work in King County, followed by presentations from lead scientists with the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington on the most current science and predications for the Western United States. In the afternoon, "invention without commitment" discussions looked at the three organizing questions (listed above), and identified ways the Carpe Diem project could support on-going and developing work.

Participants included representatives from public utility and water agencies, environmental, sustainability, social justice, tribal and conservation NGOs, key researchers, scientists and policy advocates, the business community and philanthropic institutions.

Special thanks was given to the Bullitt Foundation staff and Board for their funding and help with the Carpe Diem project, along with thanks to King County and the Energy Foundation for support of the convening.

## II. Convening Outcomes

**Question #1: *Is there an opportunity to build common agendas around a response to climate change impacts on western water?***

There was general agreement that there are any number of solutions (policy, regulatory, management, best practices, etc.) for addressing climate change impacts on western water - the challenge is to develop a process for action on common agendas. Many participants emphasized the need to highlight and translate local and regional work to a larger, West-wide agenda. *“Don’t jump to solutions - stay focused on the possibilities for now.”*

Some key differences among stakeholders were noted:

- Different organizations are on different timelines - e.g., many water agencies need to make planning/spending decisions within the next 1-2 years; other sectors have a more long-term horizon.
- Some participants saw western water policy/legal changes as priorities; others felt that the emphasis should be on building on local best practices projects, that moving towards legal and regulation changes would be divisive and unproductive.

**Question #2: *If yes, what might some of those common agendas look like?***

Using an “invention without commitment” process, meeting participants began to identify possible common agendas:

- A suite of recommended policy changes focused at the local government level and based on the four criteria as outlined by Alan Hamlet of the University of Washington Climate Impact Group.
- Creation of a fair, equitable and efficient set of principles/best practices for transferring water from rural to urban areas.
- Development of a portfolio of smaller adaptation projects that address long-term climate change impacts.
- A set of policies/practices that ensures water for the environment and poor communities.

*“Are grand policy recommendations appropriate, even though they are sexy? A series of small changes employed in concert may suspend the bureaucratic need for certainty as the possible failure rate is much lower.”*

*“We need to stay focused on the 20,000, or even 40,000 foot level - without the West-wide and long-term context, local work will not be effective.”*

### Question #3: *What would we need to know and do next?*

Drawing on the morning's science presentation and discussion, meeting participants identified "what we need to know" and "what we would need to do next":

#### Science and policy research needed:

- "Own" the water and climate story -develop and implement a communications strategy - the public doesn't know much about the issues and the impact on their lives, interests and pocketbooks.
- Determine what changes to western water policy/law could help to better address climate change impacts. What already exists and works well?
- Conduct an analysis of functioning ecosystems; create a template for vulnerability analysis; and an understanding of "what we are restoring to".
- Develop a better understanding and analysis of the economic impacts of water use in both energy production and the energy needed to treat and deliver water.
- Develop a better understanding of ecosystem services, especially the benefits of maintaining intact river systems (example given of the value of the Upper Snake river basin in mitigating climate change impacts.)
- An analysis (quantifiable where possible) of "who wins and who loses" - rural vs. urban; poor people; fish & wildlife, etc.
- An analysis of the impact on human health.
- Examine new infrastructure - create a standard (ala LEED?) for when and what; do a comparative study of water storage vs. other options
- Examine the role of groundwater as natural storage when precipitation patterns are changing.
- Develop more examples of effective projects that provide good science to local decisions makers than in turn creates good local planning and practices.
- Create of scenario standards; a better understanding of the transition to scenario planning; better models/information on more local impacts.

#### "Parking lot" Ideas for further development/discussion:

- A key area of discussion/concern was around property/water rights issues. Some participants felt that any consideration of water rights was premature and not helpful; others felt that it was time to explore ways in which water rights owners could maintain their 'property' but at the same time convert that water to different uses (e.g. environmental use).
- The "storage issue" was raised as an example - along with the "growth issue" of "third rail" proposals that need to be re-examined.
- Growth and water. Generally acknowledged as the 900 pound gorilla. (no solutions proposed.)
- Tribal elders could provide new information on cycles of ecosystem changes and what type of restoration work would be most effective.
- Impacts of water transfers on rural community, food security, and rural economies.

- Impacts of efficiencies, drawing lessons from the increased efficient use of electricity over the past decade. *“Water is going to have proportionally much larger cost increases than even oil.”*
- Changing the belief that flowing water is “wasted water.”
- Is there a role for carbon trading and ecosystem protection for water?
- “Not the usual suspects” people/organizations/new stakeholders to involve: business - real estate development industry; investment community; manufacturers who rely on large quantities of water for their products; Women’s health organizations; CDC; state health agencies; Poets and artists; Local tribal leaders; People in other parts of the world who are asking the same questions, eg: European Environment Agency.

### **III. How the Carpe Diem project can support on-going and developing work around the West.**

#### Overall recommendations:

- Convene diverse stakeholders. Provide an “invention without commitment” process to discuss ‘third rail’ issues (e.g. storage, water rights, etc.)
- Look at/analyze key issues currently not high on the radar screen - e.g. who will be the winners/losers and how to minimize the later. What, on a West-wide basis, is the role of energy production/use issues? What will be the impacts on tribal waters? What are the human health impacts? What is the evolving role of private sector investment? Developing a better understanding of the ecological impacts on key ecosystems.
- Stay at the 20,000 foot level - bring the west-wide context to local and regional work; highlight and connect the local/regional work to the larger west-wide framework.
- Provide a framework/coherent agenda for looking at what solutions/actions are needed now in the context of a long-term (10 year?) policy/management/regulatory/practices agenda.
- Help develop a suite of communications strategies that can be used by local and regional organizations.
- Provide a clearinghouse of information and ideas; support robust intellectual discussions.
- Help create west-wide political support and leadership at the federal level - e.g. a “Western Water & Climate Change Advisory Review Commission”

#### For philanthropists:

- Provide the “20,000 foot” view and link long-term policy change to regional/local work.
- Help smaller funders determine how they can have real impact on the issues.
- Provide prioritization of needs and triage.

#### For NGOs:

- Help attract substantially more funding to this work.
- Develop a communications template that local and regional groups can use.
- Help create the processes by which the ‘big picture’ science is translated to understanding impacts on local watersheds.

#### For public agencies:

- Continue to bring together diverse groups to discuss the issues.
- Find, highlight, connect best agency practices.
- Provide central place/clearinghouse of current information, science, practices, etc.

#### For scientists/researchers:

- Provide forums with diverse stakeholders to look at the current science.
- Help disseminate the message that we need honesty about the precision of climate modeling, especially at the local level.

## **IV. “If we had \$7 million in venture capital funds...”**

Convening participants were asked to think/dream (“out of the box”) about funding needs and to post their ideas with, where possible, approximate costs:

- Communication plans and strategies for local/regional NGOs - (Cost - \$250,000)
- Creating an overall communications plan and template (Cost - create/\$1 million; effective implementation cost - unknown)
- Fund the full development of the “Bullitt Western Water & Climate Change Commission” - and the resulting report. (Cost - \$7 million)
- Fund the Carpe Diem project in 2008, including additional regional convenings (Cost - \$350,000)
- West-wide coordinated scenario planning - e.g. test and expand the King County experience; develop lessons learned, best practices; identify common adaptation strategies and align specific strategies with unique conditions; develop data-sets, analysis tools; presentation tools that other communities can use. (Cost - unknown)
- A project to reduce the per-capita use of treated drinking water by 25% in 10 years; 75% in 50 years, and to show the environmental benefits, water security, energy savings and economic benefits that will accrue as a result. Initiate in 3-5 western communities in the next year; 25-50 in the next five years. (Cost - \$5 million)
- Fund “Five Big Ideas” - \$1 million each - \$5 million. Two most successful get another \$1 million each. (Cost - \$7 million)
- Major convening/conference or commission - key experts, good media, field hearings, etc. (Cost - unknown)
- Improved snowpack and soil moisture observations resulting in vastly improved runoff forecasting tools. (Cost - unknown)
- Campaign to get USGS stream gauges funded. (Cost - \$300,000)
- Develop/improve residential “pocket” systems for onsite capture of rain, waste-water, grey-water for non-potable purposes. (Cost - unknown)
- Create a newsletter with new climate change for summaries of science scenarios (Cost - \$75K annually); Create an on-line community forum for the progressive water community to exchange information and ideas and to provide a common data - set of current science, new policies and best practices. (\$75,000 annually)
- Create an investment fund (revolving or risk funding) to enable local/regional governments to ‘experiment’ with new infrastructure approaches. (Cost - unknown)
- Stable funding for the Climate Impacts Group (Cost - unknown)
- Secure a base-flow for the Colorado River Delta in Mexico. 51,000 acre feet needed @ \$185,000/AF (rights in perpetuity) = \$9.5 million

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## Convening Participants

- Kerry Anderson, True North Foundation
- Sarah Bates Van de Wetering, Western Progress\*
- Jessica Bearman, Exloco
- Liz Bell, Wilburforce Foundation
- Jabe Blumenthal, Bullitt Foundation
- Amy Bowers, Native American Rights Fund
- Emily Brott, Sonoran Institute
- Daniel Cordalis, National Congress of American Indians
- Don Elder, River Network
- Ned Farquhar, NRDC\*
- Paul Fleming, Seattle Public Utilities
- Pat Ford, Save our Wild Salmon
- Rachel Golden, Energy Foundation
- Alan Hamlet, Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington
- Holly Hartmann, CLIMAS, University of Arizona
- Denis Hayes, Bullitt Foundation
- Denise Joines, Wilburforce Foundation
- Lillian Kawasaki, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power\*
- Amber Knox Bullitt Foundation
- Karen Knudsen, Clark Fork Coalition
- John Kober, Pacific Rivers Council
- Steve Malloch, Carpe Diem Project Associate\*
- Nate Mantua, Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington
- Rob Masonis, American Rivers
- Shaun McGrath, Western Governors Association
- Bill Mitchell, Flatcoat Consulting & Alki Fund\*
- Terry O'Day, Environment Now
- Jaime Pinkham, Columbia Basin Inter-tribal Fish Council
- Zoe Rothchild, NW Fund for the Environment
- Stephen Saunders, Rocky Mountain Climate Organization
- Karin Sheldon, Western Resource Advocates
- John Shurts, NW Power & Conservation Council
- Ron Sims, King County
- Amy Solomon, Bullitt Foundation
- Fran Spivy-Weber, California State Water Resources Control Board\*
- Meghan Thompson-Payne, Exloco
- Kay Treakle, Harder Foundation
- Brad Udall, Western Water Assessment/NOAA
- Marc Waage, Denver Water
- Maggie Walker, Bullitt Foundation
- Anne Watkins, State of New Mexico
- Steve Whitney, Bullitt Foundation\*
- Kimery Wiltshire, Exloco\*

\* Carpe Diem Project Team members