



February 23, 2011

Nancy Sutley
Chairwoman
Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Madame Chairwoman:

The Water Resources Coalition (WRC) is writing to express its continuing concern with the future of water resources projects in the United States as they could be carried out under the July 2009 draft revisions to the Principles and Standards (P&S) of the Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies (P&G).

In December 2010, the National Research Council (NRC) identified at least five major systemic errors in the 2009 document issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), each of which should disqualify the Council from issuing the P&S in anything like their present form. Indeed, the NRC reviewers found the document so confused that they concluded that “detailed advice [from the NRC] on specific planning procedures at this point would be premature.”

The WRC, which has already expressed the depths of its concern over the 2009 draft in detailed comments submitted to you in April 2010, urges the CEQ to adopt each of the detailed recommendations contained in the NRC’s report. The NRC has raised substantive issues with the CEQ’s initial draft of the P&S—issues of such significance, in fact, that any revisions to the P&S that would accommodate the NRC’s findings would make the CEQ proposal a substantially different document from the one released in 2009. This would raise serious questions about the adequacy of the CEQ’s procedures in issuing a final document that differs substantially from its earlier proposal. Our primary concern is that the new document might fail to give interested parties adequate notice of the scope and substance of the final P&S requirements. Adequate notice is particularly important with respect to rules that undergo substantial revision to ensure that the public is given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process and is not completely unprepared for any significant changes contained in the agency’s final rule.

The WRC therefore urges the CEQ to revise the Principles and Standards to satisfy the NRC objections. It is essential that the P&S meet the stringent requirements of the Water Resources Development Act of

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2007 and the NRC criticisms. Because the NRC revisions would render the P&S to a large extent a new rule, the CEQ must publish the revised document for further public comment. Only in this manner can the CEQ assure itself of a fair and transparent process for establishing essential requirements for the planning of water resources projects.



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