

WATER ENVIRONMENT FEDERATION

Title: Climate Change Position Statement

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BACKGROUND

Climate change is the long-term shift in global patterns and trends in temperature and precipitation. There is scientific consensus that this is largely due to the build-up of greenhouse gases from human activities, and it is a critically important and urgent risk to the future of water and the world. While the specific effects may vary regionally, scientists have concluded that climate change's effects on the hydrologic cycle worldwide include changes in precipitation patterns; increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, and droughts; and lake and sea level rise. These effects can have significant social, environmental, and economic consequences, including disruptions to food production, declines in water quality, harm to public health and safety, and interruption to utilities' operations and ability to deliver water services to communities. Low-income communities and communities of color can be disproportionately exposed to these consequences.

Some wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water sector partners are already working to adapt to and mitigate climate change. Actions include conducting vulnerability assessments, enhancing the resilience of facilities and operations, developing integrated water management plans, and adopting technologies and approaches such as water reuse, smart technology, and green infrastructure. They are also working to directly reduce this sector's greenhouse gas contribution through energy efficiency, resource recovery, and renewable energy development. However, despite these efforts, progress in the water sector and throughout our society has been insufficient. The impacts of climate change continue to grow and more progress on mitigation, adaptation, and resilience planning is urgently needed.

ALIGNMENT WITH WEF'S MISSION AND CRITICAL OBJECTIVES

Since 1928, it has been the mission of WEF and its members to protect public health and the environment. This position statement is consistent with our mission and the following critical objectives:

- [2b](#): Increase offerings in practice growth areas such as stormwater, water reuse, and resiliency to meet water sector priorities while maintaining WEF's core excellence.
- [4a](#): Drive and increase in resource recovery in the water sector.
- [4b](#): Drive research and innovation in the water sector.

POSITION

The effects of climate change are a critically important and urgent risk to the future of water and the world. Climate change knows no boundaries, which means all sectors of society must do their part to mitigate and adapt to it. It is imperative that climate change mitigation and adaptation in the water sector be prioritized to ensure our continued ability to consistently deliver on our mission to protect public health and the environment, as well as to deliver on the promise of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. In that spirit WEF supports:

- All levels of governments (national, state/provincial, and local) and stakeholders advancing mitigation, adaptation, and resilience planning efforts through holistic and appropriate policies, programs, legislation, and regulations while providing adequate funding for implementation.
- All water sector professionals and entities accelerating the adoption of technologies and approaches that mitigate the causes of, and enhance adaptation and resilience to the impacts of, climate change.

- Utilities assessing their climate change related risks and vulnerabilities, as well as securing adequate funding to address them.
- Utilities incorporating resilience and water security at every level including planning, design, construction, operation, and delivery, to ensure they continue to provide critical services for their communities under the stresses from extreme weather and other climate change related issues.
- Improving our ability to understand, quantify and forecast the effects of climate change, and to develop effective solutions and adaptive management techniques.
- Professional and non-governmental organizations and their stakeholders increasing collaboration to achieve a sustainable water environment and infrastructure that supports human, economic, and ecological well-being.
- Upholding socio-economic and environmental justice, and equity at every level of planning, financing, design, construction, operation, and delivery of all water infrastructure and services.