



Water Utility Climate Alliance

2017–2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

October 10, 2016



Introduction

What were once considered long-term, next generation climate-change challenges are being observed today: sea-level rise, more intense and severe droughts and forest fires, earlier spring snowmelt and runoff, and more frequent extreme precipitation events. Warming is having significant impacts on the water cycle, with potentially profound implications for the ability of water utilities to reliably provide customers with clean, safe drinking water in the future. While we can see what is happening today, the pace and character of future change are uncertain. Climate adaptation strategies are now being developed and implemented across many sectors, but it is not clear whether they will be adequate to meet the challenges. In this complex and at times confusing environment, it is essential that water utilities lead.

The Water Utility Climate Alliance (WUCA) formed in 2007 to provide leadership and collaboration on climate change issues facing the nation's water agencies. This coalition, guided by a previous five-year strategic plan and annual work plans, has developed into a credible voice on climate adaptation issues, and is often asked to provide a decision maker's perspective on the climate challenge to researchers and government agencies investing in the nation's resilience. The collaboration across institutional boundaries within and outside WUCA has allowed its members to learn from one another and to develop and test new methodologies for assessing climate vulnerability and planning for adaptation.

Currently comprised of ten of the nation's largest drinking water providers serving nearly 50 million customers, WUCA members are:



This 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (Plan) represents the coalition's commitment to regularly assess WUCA's role in the water sector climate adaptation space, identify strengths that can refresh the group's near-term focus, and define WUCA's longer-term trajectory. It outlines strategic priorities, goals, and objectives that WUCA will pursue over the next five years, presents a refined mission and vision for the coalition, and articulates its approach to collaboration and intended target audiences. The Plan was developed by the member utilities on a consensus basis.

Vision Statement

Climate-resilient water utilities, thriving communities

Mission Statement

Collaboratively advancing water utility climate change adaptation

The members of WUCA provide safe, clean, and reliable drinking water to nearly 50 million customers across the United States. WUCA is committed to climate change adaptation, sustainability, and resilience. We work to understand and use the physical, social, and decision sciences relevant to climate change. Members collaborate with a variety of partners to responsibly prepare for and reduce the risks posed to water systems by climate change. Example areas of inquiry include:

- Climate science
 - Impact assessments
 - Adaptation practices
 - Planning and risk management techniques
 - Policy development
 - Communication tactics
 - Decision-making approaches
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Strategic Priorities, Goals and Objectives

Presented here are WUCAs strategic priorities, goals, and objectives. The goals define the strategic priorities WUCA will pursue to advance its mission over the next five years. The objectives outline the approach WUCA will use to achieve these goals and provide a framework for annual work plan activities. WUCAs strategic priorities are:

- INNOVATE AND LEAD
- MAINSTREAM AND OPERATIONALIZE
- KNOWLEDGE GENERATION
- KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
- SUSTAIN THE COALITION

INNOVATE AND LEAD

GOAL: Leverage our collective knowledge and experience to enhance climate change adaptation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Pursue opportunities to challenge current thinking and push the boundaries of the climate adaptation field
- Motivate action on national policy and funding issues directly relevant to climate change adaptation and water utilities
- Build strategic partnerships to inform climate issues of importance outside our core focus areas
- Shape emerging research
- Convene expert information-sharing forums



Sustain the Coalition

WUCA 2017-2021 Strategic Priorities

MAINSTREAM AND OPERATIONALIZE

GOAL: Integrate climate change into water utility business practices.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase climate literacy within member utilities
- Research when and how to use climate information in utility decisions and business practices
- Document mainstreaming practices

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

GOAL: Advance the state of climate change adaptation knowledge.

OBJECTIVES:

- Build and maintain strategic partnerships to develop WUCA products
- Stay abreast of current and emergent trends
- Convene and participate in collaborative research, forums, and workshops
- Develop, test, and evaluate new techniques, approaches, and adaptation strategies

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

GOAL: Expand knowledge sharing and the reach of WUCA products.

OBJECTIVES:

- Build and maintain strategic partnerships to disseminate WUCA products
- Distill and distribute WUCA knowledge in effective formats
- Maintain an up-to-date website and explore social media presence
- Create effective mechanisms for information sharing among WUCA members and our collaborators

SUSTAIN THE COALITION

GOAL: Strengthen the alliance.

OBJECTIVES:

- Address administrative capacity burden
- Define project design and prioritization process
- Revise by-laws to clarify and strengthen decision-making processes and expectations of membership
- Ensure continuity of staffing resources
- Consider strategic addition of new member utilities
- Pursue supplemental ways to meet funding needs

Collaborators and Target Audiences

Member collaboration is the foundation of WUCA. This collaboration requires sustained engagement from WUCA members to share experiences and lessons learned, generate knowledge, and jointly conceive and execute innovative projects that support the members' climate adaptation efforts. To fulfill its mission and vision, WUCA also actively engages and collaborates with partners from the research and climate adaptation community, national policymakers, other water utilities, as well as with local groups working on climate issues. Frequently collaborators are also the target audience for WUCA project outputs, and the coalition strives to create and leverage this two-way dialogue to most effectively advance climate adaptation.



This figure depicts the dynamic relationship among member utilities, the WUCA coalition, and the key collaborators and target audiences who are critical to WUCA's success.

Conclusion

WUCA's 2017–2021 Strategic Plan captures the coalition's current thinking about its priorities, goals, and objectives. Over the next five years, this plan will guide the development of WUCA's work plans and serve as a touchstone as the coalition continues its collaborative efforts to advance water utility climate adaptation, and create climate-resilient water utilities that support thriving communities. In 2021, WUCA will revisit this plan and refresh its strategic priorities, goals, and objectives.

Membership Roster

The WUCA member lead executives and staff listed in the table below contributed to and reached consensus on the content of the WUCA 2017-2021 Strategic Plan.

	Agency	Lead Executive	Assigned Staff
	Southern Nevada Water Authority	John Entsminger, General Manager	Keely Brooks, Climate Change Policy Analyst (WUCA Chair) Jeff Johnson, Water Management and Accounting Manager
	Denver Water	James Lochhead, CEO/Manager	Laurna Kaatz, Climate Science and Adaptation Program Manager, Planning Division (WUCA Vice Chair, Strategic Plan Lead)
	Central Arizona Project	Theodore C. Cooke, General Manager	Mohammed Mahmoud, Planning Analyst, Colorado River Programs
	Metropolitan Water District of Southern California	Jeff Kightlinger, General Manager	Brandon Goshi, Manager of Water Policy and Strategy Jenny McCarthy, Assistant Resource Specialist, Water Resources Management Group David Sumi, Associate Resource Specialist, Water Resources Management Group
	New York City Department of Environmental Protection	Vincent Sapienza, Acting Commissioner Angela Licata, Deputy Commissioner of Sustainability	Alan Cohn, Director of Climate and Water Quality
	Portland Water Bureau	Michael Stuhr, Bureau Director	Edward Campbell, Director of Resource Protection and Planning Kavita Heyn, Climate Science and Sustainability Coordinator
	San Diego County Water Authority	Maureen Stapleton, General Manager	Tim Bombardier, Senior Water Resources Specialist
	San Francisco Public Utilities Commission	Harlan Kelly, Jr., General Manager	David Behar, Climate Program Director Alexis Dufour, Water Operations Analyst
	Seattle Public Utilities	Ray Hoffman, Director	Paul Fleming, Lead, Climate Resiliency Group
	Tampa Bay Water	Matt Jordan, General Manager	Alison Adams, Chief Technical Officer, Science and Technology Division Tirusew Asefa, Manager, Modeling and Decision Support

