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WESTERN WATER & CLIMATE CHANGE
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AN INTERVIEW WITH FRAN SPIVY-WEBER

Conservation is an Asset



“The key is to have a campaign to bring parity between water and energy conservation.”

Q. You've noted the consensus that water conservation is one of our best and least-cost approaches to enhancing water supply and reducing energy costs but that we don't have the data to make the case in many western states. What would be your recommendation for developing the data?

FSW: The key is to have a campaign that will bring more parity between water and energy conservation. Leadership at the federal level, particularly around the idea of parity between water and energy conservation, would be very helpful. So would an energy policy that includes water and stimulates the collection of data on the energy savings of water conservation. It will take incentives from the federal government to the states to make this happen. At the moment, there is federal financing for renewables and energy agency charges for energy conservation, but there is not much funding for water conservation. There should be incentives for both.

The California Public Utility Commission studied embedded energy in water and identified groundwater pumping as a huge source of energy consumption. More efficient pumps and pump software are being developed but on a relatively slow track compared to other activities intended to reduce greenhouse gases and encourage renewable energy development. Some groups in Texas are collecting data to support conservation, but the information sources are so decentralized that getting adequate data is difficult.

Q: Do you agree with those who say that if California could establish programs that demonstrate the effectiveness of integrated water and energy planning, they could go national? How would that work?

FSW: California has two important assets. One is size, which translates into purchasing power and economic leadership in the country. The second is that we have a reputation for being on the cutting edge of technologies and approaches. In both of these areas California could be a leader for integrating water and energy, but so far it has not been. This is largely because the agencies responsible for water and energy are only now starting to understand each other's processes and to recognize the mutual benefits of working together. We will have to get out of our silos if we are going to take this kind of leadership on the national stage.

The Pacific Northwest has been the most explicit in showing leadership in these areas. In looking at the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's [energy management report](#), I see elements in it that are not hydropower specific that could be applied elsewhere. They are incentivizing energy and water conservation, and they are tracking the actual effect on demand of both types of conservation. These approaches could apply across the country. Conservation is an asset.

Q: What do you think would be the best avenue for integrating water and energy efficiency planning?

FSW: We've already talked about the importance of water and energy agencies working together. Again, this can be encouraged by the federal government if they require coordination and collaboration when they make state grants. I think California can continue to integrate planning and programs between its water and power agencies, but incentives will speed the process.

Additionally, at the direction of the governor, the State of California has formed climate action teams in various subject areas — energy, water, health, biodiversity. What is interesting is that the one cost-cutting issue most of these teams have identified is water. This underscores once again that integrating good water management and good water-energy management into the state or federal approach to water and energy will have cascading effects into protection of biodiversity, improved agricultural capability, and even improved public health.

Q: What could the Carpe Diem Project do to help make conservation a bigger part of the water-energy conversation?

FSW: Carpe Diem could hold a mini-convening of the federal and state government agencies and regional and local agencies with on-the-ground experience in linking energy and water. The deliverable would be successful elements or program criteria and processes that work to reduce energy use through water- and energy-efficiency projects.

Frances Spivy-Weber was elected Vice-Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board in 2009. Before being appointed to the Board in 2007, she served as Executive Director of the Mono Lake Committee. She was Director of International Programs for the National Audubon Society and a legislative assistant for the Animal Welfare Institute. She has served on many boards, including the Water Education Foundation, California Council of Land Trusts, and the Clean Water Action/Clean Water Fund. Fran has a BA from the University of Texas in history and political science and an MA from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She is a Carpe Diem Project Team member.

The [Carpe Diem - Western Water & Climate Change Project](#) is a network of over 600 experts and decision makers dedicated to addressing the unprecedented challenge that the impacts of climate change on water resources pose for the western United States. The Project is housed at [Exloco](#), a nonprofit organization with expertise in spotlighting critical issues and facilitating strategic thinking.

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