

JAY S. HAMMOND, GOVERNOR

WATER RESOURCES BOARD

323 E. 4TH AVENUE
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501

August 9, 1980

Jay S. Hammond, Governor
State of Alaska
Pouch A
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Governor Hammond:

The purpose of this letter is to strongly endorse Alaskan membership in the Western States Water Council. At several of our recent meetings the Alaska Water Resources Board has been informed of the activities of the Western States Water Council by Brent Petrie and Steve Mack of the Department of Natural Resources and Tom Meacham and Pete Froelich of the Department of Law. Last July I had the pleasure of welcoming the Council to Alaska on behalf of the State at their summer quarterly meeting in Sitka. At the past two meetings the Board has discussed endorsing Alaska's membership on the council and at our June 1980 meeting the Board agreed to urge you to have Alaska join the Council as a fully participating member.

We support membership for the following reasons:

1. At the meetings and through contacts with the Western States Water Council, the state can find out what is happening in Washington, D.C. and the other western states on water issues. Western States Water Council meetings attract important federal officials in the water resources business which would give the state an opportunity to formally and informally present its views on water issues to national decision makers.
2. The Western States Water Council has a full time staff that works on policy alternatives, presents Western States positions at congressional hearings and other meetings, and is available to provide assistance to member states. If Alaska was a member, that staff would be working for us also. The staff is presently developing a litigation repository which is accumulating legal briefs, research, and other legal efforts by the member states for the use by all members. This could be a valuable tool for the Department of Law and Department of Natural Resources.
3. Participation in the Western States Water Council will allow greater professional to professional contact among state agencies. The member Western States have more developed water programs, especially in water management, and we can learn much from them.

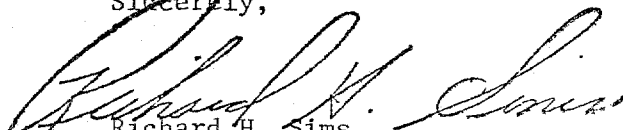
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4. Last but certainly not least, with the Alaska lands bill and other national issues that are currently before Congress and the general public, it is becoming apparent that Alaska's interests lie most often with the western states. This is certainly so with water issues. We have a similar water law and similar, or even worse, federal land ownership patterns. The Western States Water Council is a forum and unifying organization for western water problems and can speak as one firm and large voice to the federal government. Alaska has much to offer and to gain formally recognizing its role as a western state.

This endorsement has not come without serious thought and discussion by the Board members. Membership in the Western States Water Council will cost approximately \$18,000 per year plus an initial cost for a share of the equity of the organization. Representatives to the Council capable of speaking for the state must be available to participate in quarterly meetings. To make this large of a commitment the state must get something of benefit back. We feel the benefits stated above are well worth the cost.

We hope you carefully consider this endorsement. Staff from the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Law plus the House Research Agency can provide you with additional comments and, I believe, support for membership. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Richard H. Sims
Chairman

cc: Ted Smith
Robert LeResche