

October 7, 1983

Bill Sheffield, Governor
State of Alaska
Pouch A
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Governor Sheffield:

The Alaska Water Resources Board, as a result of discussions at our August 11, 1983, meeting, would like to convey to you our strong endorsement for full membership of Alaska in the Western States Water Council (WSWC).

The WSWC was created in 1965 by Governor's at a Western Governor's Conference with the purpose of accomplishing effective cooperation among the participating states in planning for programs leading to integrated development by state, federal, and other agencies of their water resources. The Governor's of 12 states; Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming; are represented on the council and provisions are made in its Rules of Organization to permit the addition of Alaska and Hawaii to its membership.

The State of Alaska has participated as observers at WSWC quarterly meetings since 1978 by various officials, including former Lt. Governor Terry Miller and staffs of the departments of Natural Resources and Law. The July 1979 quarterly meeting was hosted by Alaska in Sitka. In Fiscal Year 1982, the State of Alaska joined WSWC as an associate member through funding by DNR. This allows Alaskan state officials to attend and observe meetings and receive Council literature, however, the State has no vote.

The WSWC is effective in researching, preparing, and communicating western state's positions on water management issues particularly as they involve Federal/State relations and disputes; such as federal reserve water rights, instream flows, basin wide adjudications, water quality, and dam safety. Many court decisions and policy decisions are being made in the Lower 48 which will set a precedent for Federal-State roles in Alaskan water management. The WSWC 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. It may be more efficient to utilize the services available through the Council rather than developing staff in Alaska's government on some of these matters. A litigation repository of state court cases involving State-Federal water cases on reserved and non-reserved water rights is

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available to member states as well as a cost sharing program for water resource projects. A copy of the Council's 1982 Annual Report and an example of their weekly report, Western States' Water, are enclosed for your information.

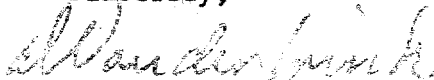
Representation through full, voting membership on this Council would formalize the inclusion of Alaska into this broad western power base representing better than one-fourth of the states. The council provides an important and much needed forum for establishing unified positions on federal water legislation and for bringing out the water problems of the western states and Alaska in particular. Each state may select three representatives for membership on the Council in addition to the Governor who is an ex-officio member. This membership could be of great benefit to several state agencies including the departments of Natural Resources, Environmental Conservation, Fish and Game, and Law.

Each state contributes a one time initial membership fee of \$15,000, payable over three years, and an annual membership fee (assessed at \$19,500 for Fiscal Year 1983-84) which is expended to influence local, regional, and national water policies and legislation. Noting that approximately one-third of the nation's freshwater supply is located within Alaska, direct participation on the council by Alaska can further serve as a vehicle to insure that Alaska maintains its stewardship over its vast water resources.

This endorsement has not come without serious thought and discussion by the Board members. To make this large of a commitment, Alaska must get something in return. We believe the benefits stated above are well worth the cost.

As your advisory board on water resources, we hope you carefully consider this endorsement. Staff from DNR can provide you with additional comments and support for membership. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



David Vanderbrink
Chairman

cc: Esther C. Wunnicke
Tom Hawkins

DV:RP:jam