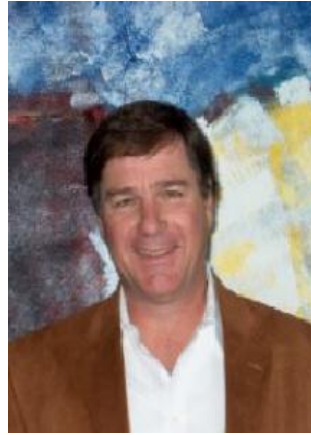


**A Message from the Chairmen
(From the Spring 2007 Mayors Water Council Newsletter)**



Mayor Martin Chavez
Albuquerque, NM



Mayor Dan Coody
Fayetteville, AR

America's cities face daunting challenges from climate change induced impacts. In the area of water resources the changing weather patterns pose serious problems of intense and prolonged droughts causing water shortages. On the opposite extreme, rising temperatures may result in rising sea levels leading to inundation of coastal communities. Water conservation and improved water supply planning can ameliorate the former problem, but the latter problem has been left to the machinations of the market place, so far.

The Mayors Water Council recognized the City of Seattle for innovative water conservation with low-income housing, and the City of San Antonio and the San Antonio Water System for their long term commitment to water conservation at the Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in Washington last January. The efforts of these cities have been phenomenal, and they deserve praise along with the recognition of their peers. The Council continues to promote municipal water conservation because we anticipate that a growing population and economy will face water shortages from droughts caused by changing weather patterns spurred by global warming.

Water conservation is a climate change adaptation strategy. Adaptation strategies are necessary even though mayors across the country have embarked on greenhouse gas reduction strategies in their cities. Our understanding is that global atmospheric carbon dioxide, and carbon dioxide equivalent is around 430 parts-per-million (ppm) and many nations are attempting to reduce emissions so that global levels will not exceed 500 – 550 ppm by the 2030s. Greater emissions reductions are necessary to lower atmospheric carbon since it is long-lasting once dispersed. Therefore, weather pattern changes that cause prolonged and intense drought will impact existing water supplies.

Currently, Americans consume between 125 to 150 gallons of water per day (gpd) just for domestic use. What is less well understood is that it takes about 145 gallons of water to produce one loaf of bread, and 1,848 gallons of water to produce 100 grams of beef. The daily diet water requirement for an American is about 472 gpd; and the daily energy use per person in America requires about 672 gpd of water. Overall per capita water consumption needs are

roughly 1,300 gpd. So the domestic use figure of 125 to 150 gpd is only part of the story. The 1,300 gpd figure, ten times the domestic use portion of overall water consumption, suggests that water conservation for domestic use is only part of the water conservation solution.

When cities plan for water supply they seldom include the nondomestic consumption requirements. They rely on industry to secure their own water supply for production purposes. Now, the rub; when a prolonged drought occurs all of the water supplies are impacted in the drought stricken area. In that scenario, public and private water use in the drought stricken area collides. An east coast city may have a plentiful supply of water, but a south-western drought may limit area water supply, reduce crop yield, raise the price for food shipped and sold to the east coast city. One way or another we are all linked into climate change impacts on water resources.

On the opposite extreme, there is growing concern in cities about rising sea levels and coastal community inundation. Many urban areas have large populations and significant public and private infrastructure at some level of risk. Insurance and re-insurance companies, such as those providing policies in Florida, are prone to limit coverage, increase deductibles, raise premiums on existing policies, or refuse to issue new policies in areas they deem to be too risky. While insurance companies are merely attempting to limit their financial risks in the marketplace to protect shareholder value, they are, inadvertently, impacting the human and physical geography of American cities. Governors and State Legislatures may respond to this problem with compromise laws and policies that provide some relief to property owners and to the insurance industry, but these solutions may simply redistribute the escalating costs of insurance for the at-risk areas to the taxpaying base not at risk to impacts by climate change induced rising sea levels. Does this foreshadow the redistributive and, some might suggest, lopsided, economics of the National Flood Insurance program? Can inland cities, instead, do a better job of merging climate change prediction capabilities and land use planning to keep population centers out of harm's way? We ask: where is the federal government in all this; what can federal agencies do to better predict rising sea levels; who is going to provide the critical coastal inundation mapping on a timely basis to target areas of high risk? The time has come to begin discussing a National Strategy on coastal community inundation and the need for Congress to devote resources to avoid serious impacts of global climate change on American cities, their inhabitants and the GDP.