

# Water Reuse in the West: Western States Water Council Report



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07/23/2021

The Western States Water Council issued a June 2021 report titled:

*Water Reuse in the West – Western State Water Reuse Governance and Programs (“Report”)*

The *Report* was compiled by Jessica Reimer and Michelle Bushman.

In introducing the *Report*, several points are highlighted:

- Western states have a particular interest in securing reliable supplies of water of suitable quality (to serve current and future needs)
- Precipitation deficits because of various factors arise west of the 100th meridian
- Such deficits pose concerns about water security and planning for the future
- Water reuse can potentially play a role in extending limiting supplies of water
- Water reuse development will require cooperative efforts among governments, private industry, academic institutions and water users
- The purpose of the *Report* is to provide insights into state governance and programs
- The *Report* is an update to the Western Water Council report titled *Water Reuse in the West: State Programs and Institutional Issues (2011)*

Water reuse is also commonly known by such terms as “water recycling” or “water reclamation.” These terms describe the reclamation of water from a variety of sources. Such water is then treated and reused for beneficial purposes which might include:

- Agriculture and irrigation
- Potable water supplies
- Groundwater replenishment
- Industrial processes
- Environmental restoration

Sources of water reuse might include:

- Municipal wastewater
- Industrial process and cooling water
- Stormwater
- Agricultural runoff and return flows
- Produced water from natural resource extraction activities

Sources of water must be treated to the extent needed to meet “fit-for-purpose-specifications” for a particular next use. These specifications would be the treatment requirements needed to ensure water

from a particular source is brought to the quality needed to ensure public health, environmental protection or specific user needs.

The states generally maintain primary regulatory authority in allocating and developing water resources. As a result, the extent water reuse is regulated, this generally occurs at the state level. Of course, if used for drinking water, the federal Safe Drinking Water Act would potentially be applicable to such use.

The *Report* is stated to provide a comprehensive review of issues such as:

- Legal/regulatory requirements applicable to reuse in 18 western states
- Discussion of the opportunities and challenges states face as water reuse continues to expand
- Overview of the statutes, regulations, and guidance within a state on the treatment requirements for different types of reuse

A significant portion of the information was obtained from survey questions provided to the relevant states.

A copy of the *Report* can be downloaded [here](#).