



*2009 CSREES National Water Conference; St. Louis, MO*

## **Public Values and Attitudes Toward Water Use in the West**

James Pritchett\*, Alan Bright, Troy Bauder, Reagan Waskom  
Colorado State University

\* James.Pritchett@ColoState.edu

### Abstract:

The western United States is experiencing rapid urbanization, and consequently, water conflicts are occurring where critical water resources are limited. To better shape water resource management and policy, it is necessary to develop tools and knowledge for informing public policy on issues related to water security. This national facilitation project gauges public knowledge, values, attitudes, perceptions and preferences related to water security issues such as water reallocation and reuse strategies, food security, and sustaining rural communities. The oral presentation will report summary findings and analysis of a two stage survey effort. The first stage engages two focus groups in a discussion of their knowledge, values and perceptions of water resources. The second stage reports summary findings from a stratified, internet survey of 6,250 individuals from 17 western states. Themes explored during the presentation will include a benchmark of respondents' water knowledge including perceived scarcity and primary water users; attitudes about water conservation; tradeoffs between guaranteeing municipal water supplies and other water uses such as agriculture, recreation and the environment; whether new water projects are desired; the means by which new projects, conservation strategies or reuse might be funded; and attitudes regarding water policy options.

### Impact Statement:

The outreach effort for this project is just beginning. The outputs of this project will enable USDA-CSREES Water Coordinators, stakeholders and decision makers to evaluate the key economic, social and environmental issues related to water security. Issues identified in focus groups and survey findings are of practical use as policies are considered for the reallocation of scarce water resources. The project will support the goals and objective of the NIQWP and fulfill policy information needs of federal and state agencies, as well as other agricultural and water organizations. Ultimately, this project will impact the ability of USDA-CSREES Water Coordinators and other agencies to develop informed water security decisions and outreach programming activities. Discussion of the survey results with program participants at the National Water Conference will allow the authors to refine analysis, engage in outreach in other venues, and develop new research objectives to support federal and state agencies.

Category: Human Dimensions

Type of Presentation: Oral Presentation