

10-1-2003

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Reed D. Benson
University of New Mexico

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Recommended Citation

Reed D. Benson, *The Interior Department's Water 2025: Blueprint for Balance, or Just Better Business as Usual?*, 33 Environmental Law Reporter 10837 (2003).

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The Interior Department's Water 2025: Blueprint for Balance, or Just Better Business as Usual?

By Reed D. Benson

The Environmental Law Reporter
October 2003
Citation: 33 ELR 10837
Issue: 10

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR or the Bureau) observed its centennial in 2002, and celebrated 100 years of building dams and supplying water for irrigation and other purposes in the western United States.¹ In 2003, the U.S. Department of the Interior (the Interior) and the Bureau shifted their focus to the future of the West and its water supply needs, producing a document called Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West.²

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and the Bureau are making a fairly big deal of Water 2025. Secretary Norton personally announced it at a June 6, 2003, conference in Denver, and the Interior (primarily through the USBR) hosted a total of eight public meetings in cities throughout the West.³ For more than two months after it was rolled out, Water 2025 remained the top story on the USBR website, and still appeared prominently on the main Interior home page.⁴ The Interior has asked for comments on the document,⁵ but has given no indication that the existing version of Water 2025 is only a draft, or that it will produce a revised version after receiving and considering comments.

The author is an Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Wyoming.

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