

## Climate Change

### Diving in the Deep End

#### Help Water Agencies Address Climate Change

##### Background

Climate change has the unprecedented potential to profoundly affect the world's water supplies. Shrinking reservoirs and more-frequent floods, among other threats, have tremendous ramifications for Americans living in dry areas or near the coast. Overcoming the challenges ahead will require the federal government to rethink how it views water and utility management.

Although daunting in scope and severity, the interactions of climate change and water can be solved, or at least managed, through appropriate planning. We need information, the will to make a difference, and bold national leadership—and the next President can make sure all of these are in place.

##### Recommendations

Specifically, the new President can work with regional, state, and local authorities to adopt a more flexible water strategy, drawing from components that:

- combine research efforts, now diffused through multiple federal agencies, into a single, Los Alamos-type center
- devise incentives for regionalization, as regional approaches are the most feasible way to meet the demands of climate change
- establish a mechanism to provide utilities and other stakeholders access to capital, with payments reasonably spread over time
- work cooperatively with water agencies to improve data collection, analysis, and planning
- promote and support collaborations among water agencies, as no agency can meet the full array of climate change-induced water problems on its own

##### Key Facts

- Fast-growing Las Vegas, whose two million residents rely on Lake Mead for 90 percent of their water, has had to work quickly to develop other sources of water supplies.



- There is concern about water-level declines in the Great Lakes, which hold five-sixths of the nation's fresh water reserves.
- Water and wastewater agencies are a significant contributor to U.S. emissions, because of their demand for electricity.
- Where developers and golf courses have embraced stringent water use restrictions, businesses and residents have also accepted conservation measures.

A full version of this proposal, as well as supporting background material, is available at [www.opportunity08.org](http://www.opportunity08.org).

## **About the Author and the Project**

### **Patricia Mulroy**

Patricia Mulroy oversees the operations of the Las Vegas Valley Water District and the Southern Nevada Water Authority, a regional agency responsible for acquiring, treating, and delivering water for Southern Nevada. She was a principal architect of the water authority, which has served as a model for other Western agencies since its creation in 1991.

Opportunity 08 aims to help 2008 presidential candidates and the public focus on critical issues facing the nation, presenting policy ideas on a wide array of domestic and foreign policy questions. The project is committed to providing both independent policy solutions and background material on issues of concern to voters.