

Atmospheric Water Resources Management
American Society of Civil Engineers Policy Statement 275

Approved by the National Water Policy Committee on March 13, 2000.
Approved by the Board Policy Team on March 17, 2000.
Adopted by the Board of Direction on April 30, 2000.

Policy

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) supports and encourages the protection and prudent development of the Nation's atmospheric water resources for beneficial uses. Sustained support for atmospheric water resource data collection, research and operation programs, and the careful evaluations of such efforts including the assessment of extra-area and long-term environmental effects, is essential for prudent development. ASCE recommends that the dissemination of results and findings of all atmospheric water management programs and projects be freely provided to the professional community, appropriate water managers and to the public.

Issue

Atmospheric water resources management capabilities are still developing and represent an evolving technology. Longer-term commitments to atmospheric water resource management research and operational programs are necessary to realize the full potential of this technology.

Rationale

The Nation's water resources are being stressed by the increasing demands placed upon it by competing demands generated by population growth and environmental concerns. As a result, the Nation has become more sensitive to year-to-year variations in natural precipitation the careful and well-designed management of atmospheric water resources offers the potential to significantly augment naturally occurring water resources, while minimizing capital expenditures or construction of new facilities. New tools such as polarimetric radar, atmospheric tracer techniques and advanced numerical cloud modeling now offer means through which many critical questions might now be answered. Continued development of atmospheric water resource management technology is essential.

This policy, and additional information about how ASCE policies are promulgated, can be found on the web at:

<http://www.asce.org/pressroom/news/policy-community.cfm?community=publicpolicy>.

To seed or not to seed... that is the question

By John Barrows

That's the question that divided the Beaverhead County Commissioners this week.

In a 2-1 vote, the commissioners approved a proposal to voice its opposition to cloud seeding in the county.

The reason, according to county commission chairman Garth Haugland, is an effort to join with the state in bringing possible legal action against Idaho, for "stripping moisture" out of the atmosphere and possibly extending the drought conditions.

Both County Attorney Marvin McCann and Deputy County Attorney Wally Congdon urged the commissioners to express their opposition, especially in face of House Bill 399 which is currently in the legislature that would allow cloud seeding.

In a statement, commissioner Donna Sevalstad split with her fellow commissions, noting that "while I agree that Beaverhead County may have a lawsuit regarding cloud seeding, I am not prepared, based on the information I have been presented, to go on record against something that could possibly help my constituents or others in the state."

She noted the bill had passed the state House on an 83-11 vote and has passed legislative legal review.

Congdon said Tuesday the commissioners and the county have been looking at the issue for several years and the state of Idaho has requested a release of liability of cloud seeding.

The county has tried to get information from a private company, "Let It Snow, Inc." that has contracted to do the silver iodide seeding.

"We tried to find out the details," Congdon said, but the county still has not been furnished the information. Legalizing cloud seeding by Montana, Congdon said, could place the state and the county into a position where it could neither sue for damages or obtain an injunction to prevent seeding in Idaho.

The issue has a long history, Congdon said, dating back to questions raised with the Board of Natural Resources on cloud seeding in the 1970s, and concerns from the farmers in the northern part of the state about effects of cloud seeding in southern Montana.

In addition to their opposition, the commissioners also approved the county attorney working with the Department of Natural Resources and the Attorney General's office on potential effects of the Idaho seeding efforts.