



Adapting to a changing world: Implications for water management.

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Everyone is aware that the world is changing, and that many of these changes will impact our water resource supplies and how they are used and managed. It's always a challenge to try to predict the future, especially the very uncertain distant future. But one thing is certain, the future environment our descendants will experience will differ from the economic, social, technological and natural conditions we experience today. Some aspects of the changes that are happening may not be under human control, but many are. And to the extent they are, we can influence that future. In this paper I attempt to speculate about a future some 40 to 50 years from now, and how water will need to be managed then. My goal is to motivate some thinking and discussion about how we as water managers can influence and prepare ourselves (or our successors) for that future. It will require collaboration among multiple disciplines to determine how best we as a profession can help society adapt to these changes, and this in turn will require all of us to learn how to work together more effectively than we do now.

This theme fits in with the current interest in sustainability, for no matter how it is defined, sustainability makes us think about the long-term future. How do we develop and manage our natural and cultural resources in ways that benefit both us and future generations of people living on this earth? What will their needs and goals be? We don't know and that is the major challenge in deciding what decisions we might make today on their behalf. Here I attempt to identify the challenges and issues water managers could be addressing some 40 to 50 years from now, and what we in each of our disciplines, and together, can begin to do now to address them.