



Maintenance and Dissemination of a Water Transfer Data Base for 12 Western States, 2005-2008

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With the West's limited freshwater supplies facing increasing pressure at a time of perhaps more variable supply, effective water management and allocation are more critical issues. The Water Transfer Data Base is the most comprehensive data set available for analyzing the extent and pattern of voluntary water market exchanges across states and time.

The project involves collaborative work between Gary Libecap and a graduate student, Zachary Donohew, to compile and maintain the largest comprehensive, publicly-available data set on water transfers and water markets for researchers and policy analysts. The data are drawn from the *Water Strategist* for 12 western states (Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas) from January 1987 – May 2008, as of this time. There are over 3,400 observations of water transfers that include amount of water, contract type (short-term lease, long-term lease, and sale), parties involved, origination use, destination use, and price (2,530 observations). The methodology is described and data categories are presented in a Word document along with an excel file of the trades placed on the Bren School Website and linked to the Bren website at http://www.bren.ucsb.edu/news/water_transfers.htm and the Center for Water Resources' website at http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/WRCA/WRC/research_sp.html. The data set is advertised on the Bren School webpage and the website describes the dataset as follows:

“With the West's limited freshwater supplies experiencing increasing pressure from agricultural, environmental, recreational, and urban demands, as well as the effects of climate change on precipitation

patterns, effective management of water is becoming a more critical issue. Private leases and sales of water as part of water markets provide one option for water management. The Water Transfer Data Base, funded by the National Science Foundation and the California Water Resources Research Center and presented by the Bren School, is the only comprehensive accounting of water trading between 1987 and 2008 in the 12 Western States. As such, it is a valuable tool for researchers and others interested in the extent and pattern of voluntary water exchanges in the West. The data include trades involving agriculture, urban, recreational, and environmental uses; the number and amounts of water involved; and the prices paid. Presenting these data as a public service is an important part of the extension mission of the University of California, as well as that of the Water Policy program at the Bren School.”

The dataset and website are continually updated.

Publications

Donohew, Zachary, “Property Rights and Western U.S. Water Markets,” *Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, in press.

Brewer, Jedidiah, Robert Glennon, Alan Ker and Gary D. Libecap “Water Markets in the West: Prices, Trading and Contractual

Forms,” *Economic Inquiry* 2008, 46(2): 91-112.

Brewer, Jedidiah Brewer, Michael Fleishman, Robert Glennon, Alan Ker, and Gary D. Libecap. “Law and the New Institutional Economics: Water Markets and Legal Change in California, 1987-2005,” *Washington University Journal of Law and Policy* 2008, 26 (August).

Brewer, Jedidiah, Robert Glennon, Alan Ker and Gary D. Libecap “Transferring Water in the American West: 1987-2005,” *Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 2007, 40(4): 1021-53.

Professional Presentations

Libecap, Gary D., Law and New Institutional Economics: Water Markets and Legal Change in California, 1987-2005, Mapping the Legal Frontiers of New Institutional Economics, University of Colorado Law School, Boulder, June 2008.

Libecap, Gary D., Water Markets as Tool for Addressing Water Shortages, Meeting on “Is there a Water Crisis in Los Angeles?” Association of California Water Agencies and Young Presidents Organization Meetings, La Canada, CA, May 2008.

Libecap, Gary D., U.S. Water Allocation and Water Markets, National Bureau of Economic Research-India Conference, Neemrana India, January 2008.

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