

WestFAST 2014-2015

Accomplishments

(July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015)

WESTFAST AGENCIES & REPRESENTATIVES

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RECLAMATION,
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ENERGY,
CRAIG ZAMUDA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) promotes collaboration between the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and 12 federal agencies with water resource management responsibilities in the West.

WestFAST was established to support the WSWC, and the Western Governors' Association (WGA) in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources. WestFAST was formed in 2008 in response to recommendations made in the WGA report titled [Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps Report](#) (*Next Steps Report*). **Specifically, WestFAST was formed to promote collaboration among federal agencies, and between states and federal agencies.** WestFAST was intended to help the WSWC implement collaborative efforts outlined in its *Next Steps Report*.

In December 2013, the WGA adopted [Policy Resolution 2014-03](#) and [Policy Resolution 2014-4](#) in which the Western Governors re-asserted States' roles in water management and planning and the essential role of partnerships with federal agencies in western water management. These WGA policies listed the following as water management priorities: (1) state primacy; (2) new infrastructure; (3) innovative water management; and (4) reliable water data. Although these 2014 Policy Resolutions supersede policy resolutions of the *Next Steps Report*, the directions and recommendations given in that report, regarding federal-state interaction and information needs, remain relevant and continue to inform issues and goals defined in subsequent WGA resolutions.

In 2014-2015, WestFAST focused on a number of federal initiatives and promoted communication between federal agencies relevant to priority issues identified in the above-referenced WGA and WSWC reports and resolutions. WestFAST also worked closely during the past year with WSWC Committee Chairs to create a new WestFAST work plan for 2015-2017. WestFAST representatives reviewed WSWC committees' work plans and the WestFAST Federal Liaison conferenced with WSWC leadership to correlate WestFAST actions plans to WSWC priority objectives. The new work plan, which can be reviewed at this [link](#), is presumed to be a living document that can be altered during the plan period to reflect changes in western states' and WestFAST agency programs and needs. WestFAST activities for this accomplishment report period are captured below including activities in WestFAST "Water Data"

2014-2015 Highlights:

- **Drafted new 2015-2017 WestFAST work plan.**
- **Jointly sponsored and participated in three WSWC water resource workshops**
- **Gave 17 presentations at 3 WSWC meetings**
- **Sponsored or facilitated, and participated in 3 focused WestFAST/WSWC water-resource issue workshops**
- **Sent monthly WestFAST Newsletter to more than 140 federal and state recipients.**
- **Initiated new WestFAST Collaboration Webinar Lecture Series**
- **Convened the WestFAST/WSWC Federal Non-Tribal Water Rights Workgroup and initiated Workgroup information clearing house.**
- **Held combined WestFAST Principals/WSWC Leadership meeting in Washington DC**

and “Drought and Water Availability” Workgroup categories supporting specific WSWC recommendations.

2.0 Coordination and Collaboration

In 2014-2015, WestFAST continued to promote the over-arching goal of improved collaboration among federal agencies, and between state and federal agencies engaged in western water-resource issues. Specific WestFAST activities in this area are captured below.

2.1 Interagency

The federal agencies that make up WestFAST all have unique roles within western water management. WestFAST provides a means for those agencies to collaborate in a way that they may not otherwise be able. WestFAST has worked in 2014-2015 in three key areas of collaboration.

- Information sharing,
- Participation in cross-agency groups
- Outreach

2.1.1 Information Sharing

- In 2014-2015, WestFAST members met monthly through conference calls to discuss ongoing programs and coordinate interagency and federal-state collaboration and outreach opportunities. WestFAST “Water Data” and “Drought and Water Availability” Workgroups met periodically to work on specific planned actions in these areas.
- In 2015, WestFAST began hosting regular “Special Topics” seminars – information meetings, held mainly via webinar, on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies and other water-resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders. WestFAST hosted 6 monthly webinars in this reporting period beginning in January 2015. The webinar series was established to provide overviews of WestFAST agency water-resource related programs briefings on “hot topics” in water-resource science and policy. Webinars specific to WestFAST agency correlation and information sharing in 2015 included:
 - 2/26/2015 – NRCS Snow Survey, Water Supply Program, and the Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN)
 - 3/26/2015 – Open Water Data
 - 6/25/2015 – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Upper Colorado Region, Reclamation Water Operations: How does it all work?
- WestFAST held a Principals Meeting on March 17th, 2015 in Washington DC, hosted by the Department of the Interior (DOI). WestFAST agency leaders reviewed the previous year’s WestFAST activities and discussed priority tasks for continuing to enhance interagency coordination and to develop positive working relationships with

western state partners and the WSWC. WestFAST Principals and representatives then met with WSWC leadership to discuss federal-state collaboration on western water issues.

During the March meeting, WestFAST representatives and Principals discussed the need to coordinate more frequently and recommended that the group convene semiannually. A fall Principals meeting has been scheduled for September 2015 to be hosted by the EPA.

2.1.2 Participation in cross-agency groups

- In 2015, the WestFAST Federal Liaison began working with the [Western Regional Partnership](#) (WRP) on the water-resource components of their programs. The (WRP) is a Department of Defense-led collaboration between federal, state, and tribal interests in 6 western states - Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. The WestFAST Liaison is working with the WRP Natural Resources Committee assisting them in developing a coordinated water-resource action plan.
- WestFAST has continued working on [Open Water Data Initiative](#) (OWDI) activities and to provide linkage from western states to initiatives and working groups forwarding the coordination of spatial water data among all levels of government. The OWDI was proposed in 2014 by a working group comprised of leadership from the Secretary of the Interiors office, USGS, NOAA, and universities. The group proposed a new initiative that will integrate currently fragmented water information into a connected, national water data framework – an objective of great interest to the WSWC. The OWDI will be collaborative, building on the work of the Integrated Water Resources Science and Service (IWRSS) consortium, and engaging the Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data (SSWD), which is a shared subcommittee of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and the Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI). WestFAST has directly engaged, during the past year, in this initiative through participation in associated workgroups and subcommittees such as the SSWD. The WestFAST Federal Liaison has work directly on the SSWD and WestFAST has linked other WestFAST representatives and agency personnel to OWDI tasks and to subcommittees.

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has taken the lead in an OWDI Water Availability and Water Supply Use Case Project. Part of that activity includes assessing the interoperability of BOR data. The WestFAST Liaison and several WestFAST representatives participated on this work case team in 2014-2015.

- During 2014-2015, the WestFAST Federal Liaison continued to work to coordinate federal agency science programs within the [Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program](#) (SCP) toward informed development and operation of projects to reduce total dissolved solids in the Colorado River Basin surface water supplies. The USDA, NRCS, BLM, and the BOR collaborate with basin states in this program. The WestFAST Federal Liaison is a member of SCP Science Team. Bob Doyle,

WestFAST BLM alternate representative, also participated in SCP planning and coordination in 2014-2015.

2.1.3 Outreach

- In 2014-2015 WestFAST published a monthly newsletter distributed to more 140 federal agency staff and state and local partners.
- WestFAST continued to maintain a [WestFAST web site](#) containing information about WestFAST's origins, goals and objective, and documentation of activities, reports, newsletters, and webinars.
- As noted previously in this report, in 2015, WestFAST began a monthly series of "Special Topic Seminars" held via webinar. One purpose of this webinar series is to disseminate information on federal interagency water resource programs to state and local partners. Webinar topics for 2015 are listed in the "Information Sharing" and "Federal/State" sections of this report.

2.2 Federal/State

From July 2014 to June 2015, WestFAST sponsored and/or participated in 7 WSWC meetings and WSWC/WestFAST jointly-sponsored seminars and workshops. WestFAST agencies gave a combined 50 presentations during these events. These efforts were very beneficial to both the WSWC and the federal agencies, in that they provided a forum for discussion on a number of priority issues. Presentations and highlights from these events included the following:

- WSWC/WestFAST Non-Tribal Water Claims Workshop; July 15 – 16, 2014, Helena, Montana
 - BOR – State and Federal Collaboration in Montana, Brent Esplin, Montana Area Manager
 - NPS – State and Federal Collaboration in Montana, Jeff Hughes, Water Rights Branch, Water Resources Division
 - DOD – Mountain Home Air Force Base Water Rights, Joe Cole, U.S. Air Force, Environmental Law Field Support Center
 - USFS – Issues Associated with State General Stream Adjudications: USFS – Montana Compact, Jody Miller, Region 1, Office of the General Counsel
 - USFWS - Accommodating Federal Water Needs within State Legal Frameworks: The Platte River Recovery Program, Meg Estep, Mountain Prairie Region Chief of Division of Water Resources
 - BLM - Issues Associated with Permitted Activities on Federal Land: Water Issues Associated with Grazing Permits in Oregon, Jana Wilcox, Water Rights Specialist, Burns District
- 175th Western State Water Council Meeting: July 17-18, 2014, Helena, Montana
 - EPA - Water-Related Activities and Rules, Shaun McGrath, Regional Administrator, Region 8

- NOAA - NIDIS Drought Update, Veva Dehaza, Drought Information Coordinator, and Roger Pulwarty, NIDIS Director
- NRCS - National Water and Climate Center Activities and Needs, Mike Strobel, Director, National Water Climate Center
- USGS – USGS Streamgauge Program – Background and Status, Mike Norris, USGS National Streamflow Information Program Coordinator
- NOAA - NOAA/WSWC Activities and Congressional Briefings, Timi Vann
- USFS - Proposed Directives for Water-Quality Best Management Practices, James Pena, Associate Deputy Chief of the NSF
- USFS - Groundwater Management Directive, James Pena Associate Deputy Chief of the NSF
- WSWC/CDWR Remote Sensing Workshop: August 25 -27, 2014 NASA Jet Propulsion Library - Pasadena, CA – A review and discussion of current and emerging NASA monitoring, mapping, and modeling capabilities relevant to assessment of water resources. WestFAST’s Brad Dorn and Forrest Melton assisted with the organization of the workshop and presented in the first-day sessions. Combined, NASA staff and other WestFAST agency representatives gave 21 presentations at the workshop including describing upcoming missions. Brad Dorn led a discussion on sustaining partnerships in hydrologic observations to close the workshop.
- 176th Western States Water Council Meeting: October 8-10, 2014, Scottsdale Arizona
 - USFS - Next Steps: USFS Proposed Groundwater Management Directive, Christopher Carlson, Groundwater Program Leader
 - DOI - DOI Water Issues, Tom Iseman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science
 - USGS - Water Programs and the Advisory Committee on Water Information, Bill Werkheiser, USGS Assistant Director for Water
- State-federal workshop on statutory authorities related to drought: December 9, Las Vegas, Nevada

The WSWC and WestFAST held a state-federal technical review workshop on statutory authorities related to drought on December 9 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The workshop followed on discussions from an October 9, 2014 WGA Drought Forum Roundtable held in Scottsdale, Arizona. Workshop attendees heard reports on the status and scope of drought response authorities and of other federal agency support programs to aid them in assessing the utility of available tools and to determine what additional instruments might yet be needed in the future. WestFAST member departments and the agencies participating in the workshop including the Department of the Interior’s Office of Water and Science, BOR, BLM, NRCS, NOAA, EPA, and the WestFAST Federal Liaison. Jeanine Jones, WSWC member, and Interstate Resources Manager and Deputy Drought Manager for the California Department of Water Resources, moderated the meeting. Planned actions coming out of the workgroup included continuing discussion between WSWC and WestFAST on the potential for drought resiliency and response activities in

the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Specifically, WSWC and WestFAST would like to explore the potential for greater state and local water agency involvement in NRCS' State Technical Committee planning process and the potential for statutory or administrative direction to USDA to annually quantify agriculture economic impacts related to drought.

- 177th Western States Water Council Meeting: April 15-17, Tulsa Oklahoma
 - USACE: USACE Short and Long-Term Drought response Authorities, Mike Abate, Chief, Civil Works Branch, Tulsa District
 - WestFAST: Federal Water Data Coordination, Patrick Lambert, (USGS) WestFAST Federal Liaison
 - NOAA: California Drought Assessment Report, Kevin Werner, Regional Climate Services Director
 - USFWS: ESA Issues in the Southwest, Andrew Hautzinger
 - EPA: Agency Update (Panel) – WOTUS Rule Making, TMDL Treatment of States, Hydraulic Fracturing Study
 - USGS: Induced Seismicity Associated with Fluid Injection, Patrick Lambert, (USGS) WestFAST Federal Liaison
 - DOI: DOI Water Issues, Tom Iseman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

- WestFAST Webinar Series: WestFAST also used selected topics from their new webinar series (described previously in this report) to share information on ongoing WestFAST agency programs with our state partners and to better understand state management of water and water resource issues. State participation was invited through the WSWC on the following webinar topics:
 - 1/29/2015 - NIDIS – The Next Generation
 - 4/30/2015 - Selected Federal activities on hydraulic fracturing
 - 5/21/2015 – Western State Water Resources: Planning, Policy and Appropriation

- WestFAST/WSWC Principals' Meetings: WestFAST also organized a WSWC/WestFAST Principals meeting with WSWC staff held March 17th, 2015 in Washington DC. WestFAST Principals and WSWC leadership discussed federal collaboration on priority and emerging western water issues. WestFAST Principals presented and led discussion on: (1) proactive Federal-State collaboration in rule-making; (2) federal response to western drought; and (3), new initiatives in the collection and sharing of water data. Principals and team members agreed to increase their meeting schedule to bi-annually to improve communication through WestFAST to the leadership of agency water programs. The second meeting in 2015 is scheduled to take place in September.

2.2.1 Proactive Collaboration in Policy and Rule Making

WestFAST has worked closely during 2014-2015 with the WSWC and the USFS to foster federal-state communication on USFS's efforts in developing new directives on stewardship of groundwater resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands. In May 2014, the USFS released the document "Proposed Directive on Groundwater Resource Management, Forest Service Manual 2560." Specifically, the proposed amendment would provide: direction on the consideration of groundwater resources in agency activities, approvals, and authorizations; encourage source water protection and water conservation; establish procedures for reviewing new proposals for groundwater withdrawals on NFS lands; require the evaluation of potential impacts from groundwater withdrawals on NFS resources; and provide for measurement and reporting for some larger groundwater withdrawals.

In response to the directive, the WGA raised a number of questions about the directive, including expressing that the directive could have significant implications for western states and their groundwater resources. The WSWC urged the USFS to not take final action on the directive until there has been an opportunity for USFS to work with member States, the WGA, and the Council to identify and seek to resolve in a mutually acceptable manner the problems which the directive is intended to address. On June 19th, the USFS withdrew the directive and announced it would hold public discussions on ways it might improve groundwater management on lands it oversees instead.

Throughout these events, WestFAST has worked to communicate USFS intent in developing the directive and to help USFS understand state perspectives on the directive. Through face-to-face meetings and conference calls, WSWC and USFS have jointly reviewed concepts in the directive and identified areas where consensus may be possible. Conferences have been facilitated by the WestFAST Liaison and USFS WestFAST representatives. Additional WSWC/USFS communication on the topic is scheduled. WSWC/USFS collaborations were discussed during the March WestFAST/WSWC Principals Meeting and with the BLM which is also planning on amending and updating some water resource manuals and instructions. A plan for outreach to western state through the WSWC, similar to what is being used now by the USFS is being developed with the BLM and the WSWC.

2.2.2 Federal Non-Tribal Water Rights Workgroup

WSWC and WestFAST held a workshop in Helena, Montana on July 15-16, 2014 that brought together over 40 state and federal officials to identify "policy options" that states and federal agencies can use to improve the process to resolve federal non-tribal water rights claims. The workshop focused on specific issues, tools, and information to be included in a workgroup clearinghouse, as well the framework, design, and format of a clearinghouse (e.g., a report, regularly updated website or database, etc.). The workshop also generated a recommendation to convene a state-federal workgroup to help guide the development of the clearinghouse and to foster ongoing communication and collaboration between the states and federal agencies.

WestFAST and WSWC convened a state-federal workgroup in November 2014 and began work on gathering documents and other information on water-right issues and settlements.

The workgroup has also planned for periodic webinars to review certain aspects of non-tribal water rights. The workgroup has selected and begun work on the first of these seminars which will review the McCarran Amendment from state and federal agency perspectives and review case studies of its application and relevance in the west.

2.2.3 Water Data

“Basic information on the status, trends and projections of water resource availability is essential to sound water management.” (*WGA Policy Resolution 2014-03 § 4*)

“Western Governors support federal efforts to coordinate water data gathering and information programs across multiple agencies.” (*WGA Policy Resolution 2014-03 § 4a*).

“The Western Governors’ Association and the Western States Water Council have worked together to create the Water Data Exchange, an online portal that will enable states to share their water data with each other, federal agencies, and the public via a common platform. The Governors encourage the use of state water data in planning for both the public and private sectors.” (*WGA Policy Resolution 2014-03 § 4d*)

“State and federal water resource agencies should work together to provide universal access to the water-related data collected by all state, local, and federal agencies, as well as tools and models that better enable the synthesis, visualization and evaluation of water-related data, including that to be shared with local governments.” (*Next Steps Report, #7*)

2014-2015 Activities:

- The Open Water Data Initiative - WestFAST and its Water Data Workgroup supported the efforts of agencies working in the Open Water Data Initiative (OWDI) established through the [Advisory Committee on Water Information](#) (ACWI) and the [Federal Geographic Data Committee](#) (FGDC). This initiative will seek to provide seamless access to water data using services-based approaches. It is following upon the principles of data sharing developed in the Water Quality Portal (a USGS/EPA/USDA water quality data sharing portal), the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (a USGS/EPA/State groundwater sharing network) and the Water Data Exchange (a project led by the Western States Water Council).

Specifically, the WestFAST Liaison and representatives have participated with the ACWI Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data (SSWD), which is charged with working on the OWDI, by facilitating WestFAST agency participation in working groups, and leveraging existing programs toward OWDI and SSWD goals. WestFAST has been closely involved in the implementation of a “use case study” as part of SSWC 2014-2015 OWDI activities. This project has targeted the lower Colorado River Basin in a pilot assessment to enable the exchange of critical information that is needed by water resource managers to make water supply decisions during periods of drought. The BOR is taking the lead in

Drought Use Case. Part of that activity will include assessing the interoperability of BOR data.

- The WSWC Water Data Exchange (WaDE) – In 2014-2015, WestFAST continued to support the WSWC in the implementation of the [Water Data Exchange](#) (WaDE). WaDE is a cooperative effort between the WSWC, the WGA, DOE, and WestFAST. WaDE is a data framework (not a data repository) which provides a central catalog of state water data (specifically water use and supply data) which allows data to be discovered and the accessed via web services.

WestFAST sees WaDE as a potential tool to support federal water resource programs such as the National Water Census and sub-programs that include assessing national water use and availability. The WSWC is also interested in promoting and incorporating shared federal water-resource datasets (streamgage data, snowpack and streamflow forecasts, reservoir storage and gage elevations, etc.) into WaDE to assist the states and make their water planning efforts easier. The WestFAST Water Data Workgroup developed a pilot study plan to test WaDE's current utility in accessing water use and supply data, and to identify federal data sets that might be cataloged in WaDE.

- National Water Census and the USGS Water Use Data and Research Program - In 2014-2015 WestFAST assisted in the coordination of the water-use component of the [USGS National Water Census](#) with the WSWC and with the development and implementation of WaDE. The National Water Census and the USGS Water Use Data and Research Program (WUDR) are implemented through the Department of the Interior's WaterSMART initiative. The programs develop new water accounting tools and assess water availability at regional and national scales. WestFAST has facilitated coordination between WUDR and WSWC WaDE developers and briefed the WSWC on the program. The WUDR program is providing financial assistance through cooperative agreements with State water resource agencies to improve the availability, quality, compatibility, and delivery of water-use data that is collected or estimated by States. WestFAST has assisted informing states, through the WSWC of the scope of these funding opportunities.
- The National Groundwater Monitoring Network – In 2014-2015, WestFAST provided support to states and federal agencies in engaging in the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN). The NGWMN Data Portal provides access to groundwater data from multiple, dispersed databases in a web-based mapping application. The NGWMN is a product of the [Subcommittee on Ground Water](#) (SOGW) of the Federal Advisory Committee on Water Information ([ACWI](#)). The WestFAST Federal Liaison worked with the SOGW in 2014-2015 and has briefed the WSWC twice on the status of the NGWMN and on funding programs beginning in 2015 to support state and local participation in implementation of the NGWMN.

2.2.4 Water Availability and Drought

“Basic information on the status, trends and projections of water-resource availability is essential to sound water management.” (*WGA Policy Resolution 2014-03, Water Resource Management in the West*)

[Federal agencies should] “Ensure there is an accurate assessment of the Nation’s water availability and water demands, with the goal of integrating the information into state water resources planning, recognizing that a truly national assessment must begin at the state and local level with appropriate technical and financial support from the federal government.” (*Next Steps Report*)

“The Council will continue working with member states, USGS and various federal agencies to gather and disseminate water resources data using WaDE and other resources. The Council will continue to participate with USGS efforts to advance a National Water Assessment.” (*Draft Water Resources Committee Work Plan 2014-2015*)

In 2014-2015 WestFAST members and the WestFAST Federal Liaison participated in the WGA Drought Forum. Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval created the Drought Forum, his main initiative as Chairman of the WGA, to foster a regional dialogue in which states and industry can share best practices on drought policy, preparedness and management. WestFAST members and WestFAST agency representatives (listed below) participated in Forums throughout the nation providing presentations and participating in round-table and panel discussions.

- BOR - Pablo Arroyave, Mid-Pacific Deputy Regional Director
- BOR - Terry Fulp, Lower Colorado Regional Director
- NRCS - Michael Strobel, Director, National Water and Climate Center
- NOAA - Deke Arndt, Chief, Climate Monitoring Branch, NCDC
- NOAA - Kevin Werner, Western Regional Climate Services Director
- NOAA - Roger Pulwarty, Director, National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)
- NOAA - Robert Webb, Director, Physical Sciences Division
- NOAA - Maria Rea, Assistant Regional Administrator, California Central Valley Area Office, NOAA-Fisheries
- NOAA - Veva Deheza, Deputy Director, National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS – NOAA)
- USFS - Don Boucher, Project Manager, Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project
- EPA - Jared Blumenfeld, EPA Region 9 Administrator
- NASA - Jay Famiglietti, Senior Water Scientist, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology
- USDA/FSA - Oscar Gonzales, California State Executive Director
- USGS - Nate Booth, Chief, Office of Water Information

WestFAST provided a review of the WGA Drought Forum Summary report at the request of the WGA. All WestFAST member agencies contributed to the review providing comment, mainly, on the open data needs identified in the Forum meetings and case studies.