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Western States Federal Agency Support Team

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2017-2019 Work Plan (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2019)

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Work Plan 2017 – 2019

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We hereby declare that we as WESTFAST partners will collaborate with the Western States Water Council to guide the development of an appropriate action plan for this partnership.

- An excerpt from *Declaration of Cooperation*

1.0 Introduction

The [Western States Federal Agency Support Team](#) (WestFAST) is a collaboration among 12 Federal agencies with water resource management responsibilities in the West.

WestFAST was formed in 2008 in response to [Western Governors' Association](#) (WGA) recommendations recorded in their report [Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps Report](#) (*Next Steps Report*), to support the [Western States Water Council](#) (WSWC) and the WGA through coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources. Specifically, WestFAST's objective is to promote and facilitate coordination among federal agencies, and between states and federal agencies, to help the WSWC implement collaborative efforts outlined in its *Next Steps Report*. Some of the areas that the *Next Steps Report* identified for federal/state collaboration included: Water policy, water to meet future demands, water infrastructure, Indian water rights, climate change, and endangered species. Subsequent WGA [Policy Resolutions](#) ([2014-03](#) and [2014-4](#)) have defined current western states water management priorities and goals including in the areas of innovative water management and reliable water data. WSWC's Executive, Legal, Water Resource, and Water Quality Committees have also established [work plans](#) defining critical areas of federal-state collaboration toward improving understanding and managing water resources in the west. This 2017- 2019 work plan defines WestFAST priority goals and activities toward meeting the team's defined objectives. The work plan is presumed to be a living document that can be altered during the two-year plan period to reflect changes in western states and participation in WestFAST agency programs and needs.

WGA and WSWC develops strategies and resolutions as a goal of encouraging and facilitating effective coordination and cooperation among local, state, and federal planners and managers. The WestFAST supports this goal and will continue to promote the over-arching goal of improved collaboration among federal agencies, and between state, and federal agencies engaged in western water-resource issues.

1.1 Successes:

Based on reviews of the 2015-2017 Work Plan, the WestFAST would like to build on its successes highlighted below.

- WestFAST initiated a structure for improving collaboration between states and federal agencies and meeting our goals by organizing WestFAST into Workgroups to facilitate work with WSWC subcommittees on priority water resource issues. Work groups are composed of current WestFAST members and other federal agency representatives with expertise and responsibility in a workgroup's focus areas the workgroups provide an opportunity for collaboration and alignment with WSWC's subcommittee goals and work plans. WestFAST will also continue to enlist multiple representatives (primary and alternate) from participating agencies with representation from both headquarters and regional offices. We believe that this level of representation provides better coverage and knowledge of national and regional programs and activities that effect western state water management. Examples of these programs follow.
- WestFAST along with WSWC held a Non-Tribal Federal Reserved Water Rights Workshop in July 2016. The hope is to establish an active workgroup to discuss challenges and solutions relating to general stream adjudications, accommodating federal water needs within the state legal and water-related issues associated with permitted activities and uses on federal land.
- WestFAST in 2016 worked with the WSWC Water Quality Committee to conduct the WSWC water-quality/water-quantity workshop and provided additional outreach from WestFAST agencies to improve understanding of the relationship of water quality to water quantity.
- WestFAST engaged WSWC and its committees to coordinate the planning and complete new focus area studies in the west - the Rio Grande River Basin, and the Red River Basin, that are projects in their third year of study.
- WestFAST assisted the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) as it took the lead in the Open Water Data Initiative (OWDI) Water Availability and Water Supply Use Case. Reclamation assessed how their data could be used in multiple systems. WestFAST assisted Reclamation with WSWC so that the WSWC could use the data. Reclamation released its [Reclamation Water Information System \(RWIS\)](#). Through RWIS, a user can access time-series water data from each of Reclamation regions. WestFAST supported the work of the "Use Case" work groups, linked to OWDI above, by identifying staff with needed expertise for group membership, supplying information on other ongoing work or resources that might be useful, and through direct WestFAST member participation.
- WestFAST provided coordinating support to Water Census programs to improve data describing water use (i.e., water withdrawals and consumptive use). WestFAST supported WaterSMART and will continue to with agencies to recommend funding through grants to State water resource agencies, to improve the availability and quality of water-use data that States collect and the integration of that data with the USGS Water Census.
- WestFAST supported the WSWC in the development of a 'Central Portal' to help synthesize and visualize the state and federal water data; the Water Data Exchange Project (WaDE)

1.2 Future Efforts:

WestFAST will build on its previous successes to continue its ‘work in the six focus areas from the Next Steps Report. It will continue to support collaborative efforts outlined in more recent WGA resolutions and WSWC committee work plans. Broad areas of support in the 2017-2019 WestFAST Work Plan include:

2.0 Coordination and Collaboration

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. Three key collaboration areas.

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

2.1.1 Information Sharing

All the WestFAST agencies have many high-priority initiatives that can benefit from coordination with other federal agencies. WestFAST provides a forum for these agencies to discuss these initiatives and to allow for the agencies to better understand how they can better work together. Here are some specific things WestFAST will do to facilitate improved information sharing:

- WestFAST members will continue monthly conference calls
- WestFAST workgroups will meet, as needed, to accomplish the activities of this plan
- WestFAST will continue to support its’ agencies’ principal leaders (WestFAST Principals) annual meeting to review WestFAST accomplishments and discuss future coordination related to federal water resource programs and policies
- WestFAST will produce a monthly newsletter sharing high profile accomplishments and descriptions of new water-related programs and directions.
- WestFAST will continue hosting regular special topic informational meetings and webinars These informational sessions will be on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies, WSWC members and other water-resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders.

2.1.2 Participation in Cross-Agency Groups

Another role of WestFAST is to participate in cross-agency groups. Some examples of activities that WestFAST plans on engaging in 2017-2019 include:

- The WestFAST is engaged with the Southwest Oklahoma Water Action Plan

(SWAP) to support and use concepts within this plan and its update as a template for how other regions in the west could improve or develop similar plans for their areas. The community leaders in the region of Altus, Oklahoma in cooperation with multiple Federal, state and local organizations want to build on a water action plan developed during a drought in 2011-12. The WestFAST and the SWAP team have been working together on future efforts for several months and are planning a meeting in SW Oklahoma in August 2017 to develop a Next Steps plan.

- WestFAST will work on National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and Drought Early Warning Systems (DEWS) – focuses on the extremes in weather conditions and provides data to assist states and agencies better prepare for and respond to multi-year drought events.
- WestFAST will coordinate with the Federal, State, and other related organizations to work on Seasonal to sub-seasonal (S2S) forecasting improvements will help organizations assess drought conditions and the possible end or onset of drought for more effective responses. This was a finding in the NOAA 2014 California Drought Service Assessment as a major need for the states. After the report was released, NOAAs used it in the process of generating Congressional support for Public Law 117-25 directing NOAA to focus research and development on Seasonal and Sub-Seasonal Forecasting.
- WestFAST will facilitate a WestFAST Principals meeting in the March 2018.
- Work with the WestFAST agencies to better understand where the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Water Center which has been developed with idea of having a consortium of Federal organizations and the National Water Model plans can best meet the needs of water users in the west.
- The WestFAST will continue, where appropriate, to engage and work with the Western Regional Partnership (WRP) which provides a proactive and collaborative framework for senior-policy level Federal, state, and tribal leadership to identify common goals and emerging issues in the Southwestern United States.
- WestFAST will continue to engage representatives from western states on how to best share spatial water data sets. The idea is to support a collaboration, building on the work of the [Integrated Water Resources Science and Service \(IWRSS\)](#) consortium and engaging the Subcommittee on Spatial Water Data (SSWD). The SSWD is a subcommittee of the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and the Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI). WestFAST will directly engage in this initiative through participation in associated workgroups and subcommittees including the SSWD.
- WestFAST will help connect the new political leadership of WestFAST agencies with each other and WSWC members to provide continued collaboration and effectiveness in western water management to further the mission of the WestFAST

and the WSWC.

2.1.3 Outreach

Since its creation in 2008, WestFAST has worked to improve its visibility and availability to assist with highlighting its agencies water activities. This is primarily done via the WestFAST web site (<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/WestFAST.htm>) as well as through a WestFAST newsletter. In addition to this, WestFAST is beginning to reach out to other organizations to inform them on this unique federal/state collaboration. To continue to improve WestFAST visibility, in 2017 WestFAST will undertake the following activities:

- WestFAST will maintain and enhance the WestFAST web site with current WestFAST activities and events and updates on WestFAST agency programs and collaborative efforts.
- WestFAST will broadly publish information about WestFAST's informational meetings to federal employee, and the WSWC, as appropriate.
- WestFAST will continue to publish the monthly WestFAST newsletter with weekly updates, as necessary, to share time sensitive information.
- WestFAST will update the fact sheet. Develop a WestFAST primer to introduce WestFAST to non-member federal agencies and state and local collaborators.
- WestFAST will participate in federal water collaborations and Federal/State collaborations. WestFAST will provide support to the SECURE Water ACT and the WaterSMART water-use program through outreach and facilitating the implementation of state grants programs through working with the WSWC.

2.2 Federal-State Partnerships

WestFAST agencies agree with and support the WSWC goal of developing “integrated approaches and greater partnerships among state, local and federal agencies” to find “optimal solutions” to the increasing challenges associated with water management in the west.

WestFAST will focus on:

- WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC in defining best practices for addressing nontribal federal reserved water rights and will be holding an additional workshop in the fall of 2017 in association with the WSWC fall meeting in Albuquerque, NM.
- WestFAST will continue to participate in the workgroup activities including identified documents to include a clearinghouse of relevant information.
- WestFAST also will support regular conferences or workshops for education and relationship-building opportunities to serve as a forum to discuss on notable developments as they arise.
- WestFAST will continue to provide the WSWC with information on the use of the new Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R Series and new product

development for Landsat and other remote sensing capabilities, including initiatives to map evapotranspiration and consumptive use, indicators of water quality, land subsidence, groundwater change, drought impacts and land fallowing, and snow water resources.

- WestFAST listening sessions. We have discussed at different times the need to hear from states about their priority needs and concerns. WestFAST can work with the WSWC and set-up quarterly webinars or conference calls between the WestFAST Team and the states using some topics of current concern as a lead off to discussing ongoing state issues.
- WestFAST will work with the Federal Non-Tribal Water Claims Subcommittee to evaluate ways the WSWC and WestFAST can improve the effective resolution of federal non-tribal water rights claims.

3.0 Support WSWC in implementation of the WSWC work plans

WestFAST plans to initiate and continue many activities related to priority water-resource issues in the west and associated recommendations and goals defined in the WSWC work plans. WestFAST will be reviewing its existing set of workgroups and adjust accordingly to focus on priority issues in WSWC work plans and in federal agency program objectives.

3.1 Drought Workgroup and Infrastructure Workgroup -The Drought Workgroup action plan also includes activities related to water quality, S2S forecasting, and water availability including impacts of climate change.

Western Governors and WSWC encourage federal agencies to partner with states in the gathering, coordination and effective dissemination of drought-related data between the federal government and states. WestFAST will work in cooperation with states to help communities develop drought preparedness plans, drought contingency plans, establish or enhance federal reservoir drought contingency plans, and be visible and engaged in all drought-related forums: nationally, regionally and locally. Public Law 117-25 directing NOAA to focus research and development on Seasonal and Sub-Seasonal Forecasting.

Activities:

- WestFAST will assess the results of the reviews of drought and recovery activities, suggestions and recommendations defined in recent assessments, such as the NOAA California Drought Services Assessment to determine opinions on priority drought information and service needs and specifically in support of coordinating roles defined under the NDRP action plan and recent and ongoing planned collaborations in the NIDIS DEWS Strategy and the recent USGS Integrated Drought Science Plan .
- WestFAST will facilitate the communication of priority needs to ongoing inter-agency collaborations such as the National Drought Resiliency Partnership (NDRP) and regional programs such as the NOAA RISAs and the NASA Western Water Applications Office. Review the progress and results of the NDRP and observed obstacles to optimal collaborative application of federal services in NDRP pilot

studies. Summarize and review these needs with WestFAST drought agency leadership.

- WestFAST will work with member agencies and with the states on their individual Western state water plans and build off findings through the work with the updates to the Southwest Oklahoma Water Action Plan.
- WestFAST will continue to work with WSWC to help develop meaningful requirements to meet the needs of long range weather forecasting in the Seasonal to Sub-seasonal range to improve water resources management in the western USA. This is of interest to range of users as this is now part of the Public Law 117-25.

3.2 Water Availability

The WestFAST and The WSWC will continue working with member states to gather and disseminate water resources data using WaDE and other resources. The Council will continue to participate with USGS and others in efforts to advance a National Water Assessment.

Activities:

WestFAST will continue to aid in coordination of National Water Census programs and actions with WSWC priorities: and the WSWC Initiative: Measuring, Monitoring, and Management. Specifically, WestFAST will:

- WestFAST will continue to provide updates on Water Census progress, products, and plans, and begin structured discussion and planning that improves data exchange (Fed-State) for Census components beyond WaDE
- WestFAST will investigation of the Nation's brackish waters is ongoing in several areas to better understand location and character of brackish groundwater to expand development of the resource and provide a scientific basis for making policy decisions in a national assessment of brackish aquifers.
- WestFAST will work to ensure inter-agency awareness of the directions of these brackish water and other marginal use water programs and that they are coordinated across WestFAST. WestFAST will continue to work with WSWC and the states on next steps to support implementation of findings.
- WestFAST will work with the WSWC's efforts on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).
- WestFAST in several areas in the west are working on groundwater management programs and especially efforts to promote conjunctive use of surface and groundwater resources through artificial aquifer storage and recovery projects which the WestFAST supports and will work with WSWC where appropriate on these efforts.

3.3 Water Quality

In conjunction with the WSWC Water Resources and Legal Committees, the Committee will hold an invitation only workshop to bring together state experts and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the interaction between water quality and quantity.

Activities:

- WestFAST will work with the Water Quality Committee to identify and coordinate with the states, federal agencies and other technical or national organizations with common interests to co-host educational workshops or symposia on relevant nexus topics, both to develop better relationships and to find additional potential solutions to nexus problems.
- WestFAST will work with WSWC support actions associated with WOTUS/Clean Water Act revisions.
- WestFAST will work with WSWC staff to continue updates the Committee(s) / Working Groups on developments within Congress and the Administration that have the potential to impact the SRFs.

3.4 Open Water Data and WaDE (Data Work Group)

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 to better enable the synthesis, visualization, and evaluation of water-related data, including that to be shared with local governments.

Activities:

- WestFAST and WSWC will continue support and review experiments and case studies related to projects such as:
 - National Flood Interoperability Experiment
 - Drought - Water Availability and Water Supply
 - WestFAST will continue to provide support to states and federal agencies in engaging in the National Groundwater Monitoring Network (NGWMN).
 - WestFAST will work to optimize coordination of data collection, compilation, storage, and dissemination activities of the National Water Census with WSWC needs and programs such as WaDE. Data collection and compilation activities as part of Water Census programs. WaDE
 - WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC on the implementation of the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) (see: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/wade/>).
 - WestFAST will identify ways that the WestFAST member agencies can better share data in a consistent format.

3.5 Water Infrastructure

States, with assistance from relevant federal agencies, should provide institutional mechanisms and otherwise encourage regional water and wastewater projects to maximize economies of scale and minimize environmental impacts from smaller, piecemeal project development.

Activities:

- The Administration, at the time of this Plan's development was rolling out plans for infrastructure and WestFAST where possible and applicable will work with the Western States with any future water projects.
- WestFAST will work with the WSWC to build a strong relationship and continued collaboration with EPA's Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center.