

**Western States Federal Agency Support Team** (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and the Western Governors Association (WGA) in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water issues.



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# WestFAST News

December 2012

## DOI, Reclamation Release Colorado River Basin Water Supply & Demand Study

Washington DC—December 12, 2012

“There’s no silver bullet to solve the imbalance between the demand for water and the supply in the Colorado River Basin over the next 50 years—rather, it’s going to take diligent planning and collaboration from all stakeholders to identify and move forward with practical solutions,” said Secretary Salazar. The Department of Interior announced the release of the Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study – authorized by Congress and jointly funded and prepared by the Bureau of Reclamation and the seven Colorado River Basin states. This study projects water supply and demand imbalances throughout the Colorado River Basin and adjacent areas over the next 50 years.

The average imbalance in future supply and demand is projected to be greater than 3.2 million acre-feet by 2060, according to the study. To give an idea of scale, one acre-foot of water is approximately the amount of water used by a single household in a year. The study projects that the largest increase in demand will come from municipal and industrial users, owing to population growth. The Colorado River Basin currently provides water to some 40 million people, and the study estimates that this number could nearly double to approximately 76.5 million people by 2060, under a rapid-growth scenario.

The executive summary of the report explains: “The amount of water available and changes in the demand for water throughout the Basin over the next 50 years are highly uncertain and depend on a number of factors.” The study made a number of assumptions to address uncertainties and analyzed a broad range of scenarios.

Authorized by the 2009 SECURE Water Act, the study analyzes future water supply and demand scenarios based on factors such as projected changes in climate and varying levels of growth in communities, agriculture and business in the seven Colorado River Basin states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming.



**Photo:** Mount Timpanogos’ reflection in Deer Creek Reservoir near Midway, Utah.

The study includes over 150 proposals from study participants, stakeholders and the public that represent a wide range of potential options to resolve supply and demand imbalances. Proposals include increasing water supply through reuse or desalinization methods, and reducing demand through increased conservation and efficiency efforts.

The scope of the study does not include a decision as to how future imbalances should or will be addressed. Reclamation intends to work with stakeholders to explore in-basin strategies, rather than proposals—such as major trans-basin conveyance systems—that are not considered cost effective or practical. Specifically, Reclamation will convene the Basin States along with tribes, other Colorado River water entitlement holders, conservation organizations, and other interested stakeholders in early 2013 to conduct a workshop to review the recommended next steps and initiate actions to implement next steps to resolve the current and potentially significant future imbalances in the Colorado River system. In early 2013 Reclamation will also consult and work with tribes regarding tribal water issues reflected in this report.

Project participants and stakeholders are encouraged to comment on the information provided in the final Study Report and associated Technical Reports. Written comments should be submitted within 90 days following the release of this report.

The comments will be summarized and posted to the Study website, and may inform future planning activities in the Basin. Instructions for submitting comments are also provided on the [Study website](#).

## EPA Releases Memorandum Regarding NPDES Regulation of “Good Samaritans”

December 12, 2012

On December 12, 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a memorandum to its regional offices, describing Clean Water Act § 402 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Requirements for “Good Samaritans” at Orphaned Mine Sites. In general, the Good Samaritan Initiative is an EPA program to encourage voluntary cleanups by parties that do not own the property and are not responsible for the property’s environmental conditions.

The intent of this guidance is to encourage cleanup activities at hard rock abandoned mine sites by providing two clarifications: one under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (“CERCLA”); and the other under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This memorandum is intended to reduce the perceived Clean Water Act legal vulnerability faced by “Good Samaritans” who want to clean up their communities. Specifically, EPA’s memorandum clarifies that these “Good Samaritans,” or non-liable parties, who volunteer to clean up these abandoned sites are generally not responsible for obtaining a permit under the Clean Water Act (CWA) both during and following a successful cleanup.

Many communities struggle to find ways to address the issues of abandoned mines. But there are some volunteers who are interested in helping restore watersheds impaired by abandoned mines. Funding for cleanup work may constitute the largest obstacle to abandoned mine clean ups. Also, based upon discussions with prospective volunteers, EPA understands that the threat of liability pursuant to the Clean Water Act (CWA) and/or the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) can also be obstacles to Good Samaritan cleanups. Because a volunteer conducting a partial cleanup could have concerns about being found liable for the entire cleanup or being obligated to obtain a discharge permit which requires compliance with strict water quality standards in streams that are already in violation of these standards.

The EPA’s administrative tools and guidance in this memorandum may reduce the threat of liability under CERCLA and encourage more Good Samaritans to restore watersheds impacted by acid mine drainage from abandoned mine sites.

See a copy of the “Good Samaritan” [memorandum](#).

See also the EPA [website](#) for more information.

## Agency Announcements

**12/03/12:** NOAA, California partner to improve forecasts of powerful 'atmospheric river' winter storms, see [link](#).

**12/04/12:** Climate Models Project Increase in U.S. Wildfire Risk, see [link](#).

**12/04/12:** 2012 Awards Presented For Achievements in Earth Remote Sensing, see [link](#).

**12/05/12:** Energy Department Issues Tribal Renewable Energy Purchase Guidance and Project Development Resources, see [link](#).

**12/11/12:** USDA Wetlands Reserve Program Marks 20 Years of Wetlands Conservation, see [link](#).

**12/12/12:** Secretary Salazar Releases Colorado River Basin Study Projecting Major Imbalances in Water Supply and Demand, see [link](#).

**12/14/12:** BLM Issues Proposal to Continue Protections on Lands Approved for Solar Energy Zones, see [link](#).

**12/17/12:** Mining Waste Byproduct Capable of Helping Clean Water, see [link](#).

**12/18/12:** Chinese delegation tours Washington Aqueduct as part of Corps' program, see [link](#).

**12/18/12:** Report forecasts natural resource management trends, challenges for next 50 years, see [link](#).

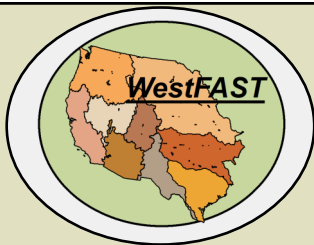
**12/20/12:** EPA Approves Clean Water Program to Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, see [link](#).

**12/20/12:** EPA Updates Rule for Pathogens in Drinking Water, Sets Limit for E. Coli, see [link](#).

**12/21/12:** EPA Releases Update on Ongoing Hydraulic Fracturing Study, see [link](#).

## Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **March 6, 2013:** WestFAST Principals’ Meeting, Washington DC.
- **April 3-5, 2013:** WSWC Spring Council Meeting, Denver, CO.
- **June 24-26, 2013:** WSWC Summer Council Meeting, Casper, WY.
- **October 2-4, 2013:** WSWC Fall Council Meeting, Deadwood, SD.



WestFAST News is published monthly. To get an Agency Announcement published or to get added to the WestFAST News distribution list contact:

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