

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

May 2014

GAO Releases Updated Report on Freshwater Availability and Use

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued an update of a 2003 report about the trends in freshwater availability and use, as well as states' views on methods the federal government could employ to assist states in meeting future water management challenges.

The report examines changes since 2003 in the following four areas: (1) issues related to freshwater availability and use; (2) expectations for water availability and use over the next 10 years and how these expectations may affect water planning; (3) steps that states have taken to manage freshwater resources; and (4) actions that federal agencies have taken to support management of freshwater availability and use, and perspectives from state water managers, experts, and literature on what the federal government can do to enhance its support. As part of this process, GAO conducted a survey of 50 state water managers. GAO also reviewed reports and documents from various organizations and interviewed federal officials to clarify freshwater issues across the nation.

GAO found that key issues related to freshwater availability and use remain largely unchanged since 2003, such as concerns about the impact of population growth on water supplies, lack of information on water availability and use, and trends in types of water use, according to state water managers, experts, and a literature review. However, GAO found certain issues have gained more attention, such as the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, including droughts and floods, and the effect of the energy sector on water quantity and quality.

According to state water managers, experts, and literature that GAO reviewed, freshwater shortages are expected to continue into the future. In particular, 40 of 50 state water managers expected shortages in some portion of their states under average conditions in the next 10 years.

See the GAO report website for more information: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-430>.

Forest Service Proposes Directives to Protect Groundwater Resources

On May 6, the Forest Service published a proposed directive (see [Federal Register](#)) on groundwater resource management, amending Forest Service Manual 2560.

The following are key points of the proposed changes to the manual.

- Create a "comprehensive direction" for the agency's management of groundwater on National Forest Service land.
- Assume that ground and surface water are hydraulically connected, unless demonstrated otherwise, using site-specific information.
- Implement appropriate water conservation measures for uses involving groundwater resources.
- Measure and report the volume of groundwater pumped.
- Evaluate the effects groundwater pumping prior to authorization or reauthorization.
- Monitor and mitigate major groundwater withdrawals and injections.
- Modify the terms and conditions of special use authorizations involving groundwater withdrawals or injections.

Forest Service is planning to host a webinar on the proposed directive to present information and answer questions on the proposed policy and the comment process during the first half of the comment period. Additional meetings or webinars will be offered as needed. Comments must be received by August 4, 2014.

Release of Third National Climate Assessment

In May 2014, the U.S. Global Change Research Program released the Third National Climate Assessment, a comprehensive report on climate change and its impacts in the United States. The report contends that climate change is increasing the likelihood of water shortages and competition for water on a global level.

Specifically, in the Southwest Region, the report describes a pattern, over the last 50 years,

of reduced snowpack in the mountains, as measure on 01 April of comparison years. The report explains that this reduction in snowpack affects runoff volumes and the timing of runoff in snow-fed rivers.

See www.globalchange.gov for more information.

Federal News

05/01: Bureau of Reclamation Water Management Video Series Highlights Collaborative Research; see [link](#).

05/01: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Completion of National Wetlands Database and Interactive Mapping Tool; see [link](#).

05/01: USDA Announces New Landmark Conservation Initiatives; see [link](#).

05/01: Secretary Jewell Convenes Third Meeting of the White House Council on Native American Affairs; see [link](#).

05/01: Cost of Fighting Wildfires in 2014 Projected to be Hundreds of Millions of Dollars over Amount Available; see [link](#).

05/02: USIBWC Monitors Water Quality After Dead Fish Reported; see [link](#).

05/02: USDA and Interior Department Green Light Conservation Practices for Farmers, Ranchers and Landowners in Five Lesser Prairie-Chicken States; see [link](#).

05/02: USDA Continues to Support Oregon's Upper Klamath Basin, Helps Landowners Conserve Water; see [link](#).

05/02: NASA-CNES Move Forward with Global Water and Ocean Surface Mission; see [link](#).

05/05: BLM Seeks Input on Refining Planning Process; see [link](#).

05/05: USACE Celebrates Monterey Groundwater Cleanup Project Finish; see [link](#).

05/05: Record Number of Oklahoma Tremors Raises Possibility of Damaging Earthquakes; see [link](#).

05/05: Secretary Jewell Highlights Landmark Contra Costa Partnership Benefiting Imperiled Species, Supporting Economic Growth; see [link](#).

05/05: Water Managers Cooperate to Create Beneficial River Flows; see [link](#).

05/06: National Research Council Releases Report Praising EPA's IRIS Program Enhancements; see [link](#).

05/06: U.S. EPA Honors Federal Agencies for Water Conservation, Waste Reduction; see [link](#).

05/06: Working Rice Lands Worth \$3.5 Billion of Managed Wetland Habitat; see [link](#).

05/07: WaterSMART Funding Opportunity Available to Establish or Expand Watershed Groups; see [link](#).

05/07: EPA Releases EnviroAtlas Ecosystem Mapping Tool; see [link](#).

05/08: "National Climate Change Viewer" Enables Focus on Future Climate-Driven Changes for U.S. Watersheds at Local Levels; see

[link](#).

05/09: Federal Agencies Propose Revised Rules to Improve Implementation of the Endangered Species Act; see [link](#).

05/14: Western Water Supply Forecast Tracks Melting Snowpack; see [link](#).

05/14: Meeting the Elevation Needs of the Nation; see [link](#).

05/15: Secretary Jewell Announces \$20 Million in WaterSMART Funding for Water Reclamation and Reuse Projects in Drought Stricken California; see [link](#).

05/15: Deputy Secretary Connor Announces Next Implementation Schedule for \$1.9 Billion Land Buy-Back Program; see [link](#).

05/16: Colorado River Reconnects with the Sea Following Historic Release of Water for the Environment; see [link](#).

05/19: EPA Finalizes Standards to Protect Fish, Aquatic Life from Cooling Water Intakes; see [link](#).

05/19: El Niño: Is 2014 the New 1997?; see [link](#).

05/20: U.S. Drought Monitor Update for May 20, 2014; see [link](#).

05/21: USDA Provides Assistance to Agricultural Producers to Improve Water Quality; see [link](#).

05/22: Supply Concerns Continue, and Uncertainties Complicate Planning; see [link](#).

05/23: Secretary Jewell Joins Community to Celebrate Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Designation; see [link](#).

05/27: U.S. Drought Monitor Update for May 27, 2014; see [link](#).

05/29: Interior Signs Agreements with Three Additional Tribal Nations to Reduce Fractionation in Indian Country; see [link](#).

05/29: New Guidance Available for Incorporating Climate Change Impacts to Inland Hydrology in Civil Works Studies, Designs, and Projects; see [link](#).

State News

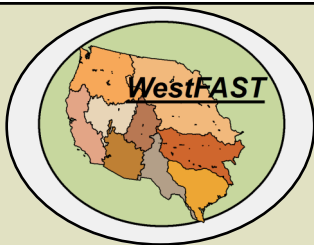
05/12: Colorado Wildfire Outlook 'Normal,' but Several Parts of State Worrisome; see [link](#).

05/13: WGA Appeals 'Water Transfers' Ruling that Would Limit States' Rights, Add Expense to Western Water; see [link](#).

05/22: Reauthorization of Water Resources Reform and Development Act includes 'Wins' for Western Governors; see [link](#).

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **July 14-18, 2014:** [WSWC Summer Council Meeting](#), Helena, Montana (Holiday Inn Downtown).
- **October 7-10, 2014:** [WSWC Fall Council Meeting](#), Arizona (Hotel TBD).



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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Check out the WestFAST Web Site: <http://www.westernstateswater.org/westfast>