

**Western States Federal Agency Support Team** (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 13 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 agencies participate in WSWC Fall Council Meetings

The Western States Water Council (WSWC) held its Fall Council (176th) meetings in Scottsdale, Arizona on October 8-10, 2014 with Federal agency representatives participating in Council Committee meetings.

Tom Iseman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science, called in by phone to update WSWC members on notable Interior activities. He said Interior will finalize interagency guidelines for the Principles and Requirements (P&Rs) for federal investment in water resources enacted by The Administration last year. Tom also said climate change, drought, data, and infrastructure continue to be areas of interest for Interior. Others on the phone included Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Jennifer Gimbel, a former WSWC member from Colorado and Wyoming; Principal Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation Estevan López, the former Director of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission; and Counselor for Water and Science Camille Calimlim Touton, formerly with the minority staff for the House Natural Resources Committee. Tom said the WSWC is well placed to work with Interior, noting its longstanding relationships with himself, Jennifer, Estevan, and Camille.

Bill Werkheiser, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Associate Director for Water, spoke at the full Council meeting and said USGS priorities for the future include: (1) national networks that are "stable, interdisciplinary, and responsive;" (2) "continued enhancement of real time monitoring and modeling;" (3) "continued development of applications for information management and delivery;" (4) monitoring and modeling for prediction and forecasting of water quantity and quality; and (5) innovative techniques for monitoring and analysis.

Chris Carlson, the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Groundwater Program Leader, discussed his agency's proposed groundwater management directive, which is intended to provide a unified direction for the agency's groundwater efforts on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Chris noted that the need for the directive stems from judicial determi-

nations that the USFS has not adequately characterized groundwater resources and the impacts of its permitted activities. Chris said the directive is not intended to infringe on state water management and acknowledged that further work may be needed to refine the proposal. He also offered to work with the WSWC to address state concerns with the draft directive.

WestFAST Chair Becky Fulkerson of the Bureau of Reclamation gave an update on her team's recent activities and noted that the National Park Service has joined WestFAST. WestFAST is currently working to more closely tie its workplan to those of the WSWC. Lastly, Becky said WestFAST will continue to work with the WSWC to improve federal-state collaboration.

## WGA and WSWC comment on U.S. Forest Service proposed groundwater Directive

On May 6th the U.S. Forest Service released a document, its "[Proposed Directive on Groundwater Resource Management, Forest Service Manual 2560](#)." The purpose of the document was "to amend its internal Agency directives for Watershed and Air Management to establish direction for management of groundwater resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands as an integral component of watershed management. 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, [Western Governors' Association \(WGA\) sent a letter](#) to the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. WGA's letter raised a number of questions about the directive, including expressing that the directive could have significant implications for western states and their groundwater resources. Secretary Vilsack responded to WGA's letter, and the U.S. Forest Service also



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extended the public comment on its proposed groundwater directive from September 3, 2014 to October 3, 2014.

In their fall meetings (October 9-10, 2014) in Scottsdale Arizona, the WSWC drafted additional remarks regarding the proposed directive urging the USFS to not take final action on the directive until there has been an opportunity for USFS to work with our 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.

## New WestFAST Federal Liaison reports for duty

Patrick Lambert, Hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, reported for duty as the new WestFAST Federal Liaison at the Western States Water Council Offices in Murray Utah October 1<sup>st</sup>. The WestFAST Federal Liaison functions as an information and coordination conduit among the Federal agencies and between the Federal agencies and the Western States Water Council and provides information to Council members, as needed. Pat comes to the liaison position from serving as the Director of the USGS



Utah Water Science Center in Salt Lake City Utah.

Pat participated in the WSWC Fall Council Meeting in Scottsdale Arizona this month and also attended the Western Governors' Drought Forum workshop, *Drought Impacts and Solutions in the Manufacturing, Mining and Industrial Sectors*. Pat says he "looks forward to getting to know, and developing working relationships with, WestFAST and WSWC members." One of Pat's first tasks will be "to facilitate the development, in collaboration with the WSWC, of a new 2015-16 WestFAST action plan to continue to efficiently carry out joint water resource initiatives."

## Changes in Department of Interior Leadership

On October 1, Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced the selections for three leadership positions in the Department of Interior:

- Kristen (Kris) Sarri will lead the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management & Budget as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary;
- Jennifer Gimbel will lead the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary; and
- Estevan Lopez will lead the Bureau of Reclamation as the Principal Deputy Commissioner.

Secretary Jewell wrote that "Kris and Jennifer have proven to be

valuable leaders for the Department and for the Administration in a series of roles. I am delighted that they will be helping to lead their respective offices over the coming months. Additionally, Estevan has been a reliable and thoughtful partner in our work on water and drought in New Mexico. Estevan is the President's nominee to be Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation and was voted out of committee in June – he is awaiting a vote of the full Senate. We have important work to do and I am glad he will be joining our team while his nomination is pending."

To see Secretary Jewell's complete announcement and more information on the new leaders, go to this [link](#).

## Another warm winter likely for western U.S. (NOAA - Oct. 16, 2014)

Below average temperatures are favored in parts of the south-central and southeastern United States, while above-average temperatures are most likely in the western U.S., Alaska, Hawaii and New England, according to the [U.S. Winter Outlook](#), issued October 16 by [NOAA's Climate Prediction Center](#).

While drought may improve in some portions of the U.S. this winter, California's record-setting drought will likely persist or intensify in large parts of the state. "Complete drought recovery in California this winter is highly unlikely. While we're predicting at least a 2 in 3 chance that winter precipitation will be near or above normal throughout the state, with such widespread, extreme deficits, recovery will be slow," said Mike Halpert, acting director of NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

El Niño, an ocean-atmospheric phenomenon in the Tropical Pacific that affects global weather patterns, may still develop this winter. Climate Prediction Center forecasters announced on Oct. 9 that the ocean and atmospheric coupling necessary to declare an El Niño has not yet happened, so they continued the [El Niño Watch](#) with a 67 percent chance of development by the end of the year. While strong El Niño episodes often pull more moisture into California over the winter months, this El Niño is expected to be weak, offering little help.



The Precipitation Outlook favors above-average precipitation across the southern tier, from the southern half of California, across the Southwest, South-central, and Gulf Coast states, Florida, and along the eastern seaboard to Maine. Above-average precipitation also is favored in southern Alaska and the Alaskan panhandle.



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Below-average precipitation is favored in Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest.

Last year's winter was exceptionally cold and snowy across most of the United States, east of the Rockies. A repeat of this extreme pattern is unlikely this year. In addition, the Temperature Outlook favors warmer-than-average temperatures in the Western U.S., extending from the west coast through most of the inter-mountain west and across the U.S.-Canadian border through New York and New England, as well as Alaska and Hawaii.

## NASA Soil Moisture Mapper Arrives at Launch Site (NASA - October 15, 2014)

A NASA spacecraft designed to track Earth's water in one of its most important, but least recognized forms -- soil moisture -- now is at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, to begin final preparations for launch in January.

The Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) spacecraft arrived October 15 at its launch site on California's central coast after traveling from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California. The spacecraft will undergo final tests and then be integrated on top of a United Launch Alliance Delta II rocket in preparation for a planned Jan. 29 launch.

SMAP will provide the most accurate, highest-resolution global measurements of soil moisture ever obtained from space and will detect whether the ground is frozen or thawed. The data will be used to enhance scientists' understanding of the processes that link Earth's water, energy and carbon cycles.



[NASA's Soil Moisture Active Passive \(SMAP\) spacecraft is slowly lowered into place in the Spacecraft Assembly Facility at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California, in preparation for shipping to California's Vandenberg Air Force Base on October 15.](#)

Soil moisture is critical for plant growth and supplies aquifers, which are underground water supplies contained in layers of rock, sand or dirt. Through evaporation, water in the soil cools the land surface and lower atmosphere while seeding the upper atmosphere with moisture that forms clouds and rain. High-resolution global

maps of soil moisture produced from SMAP will allow scientists to understand how regional water availability is changing and inform water resource management decisions.

SMAP data also will aid in predictions of plant growth and agricultural productivity, improve weather and climate forecasts, and enhance our ability to predict the extent and severity of droughts and where floods may occur. SMAP's freeze/thaw data will also be used to detect changes in the length of the growing season, which is an indicator of how much carbon plants take up from the atmosphere each year.

To make its high-resolution, high-accuracy measurements, SMAP will combine data from two microwave instruments -- a synthetic aperture radar and a radiometer -- in a way that uses the best features of each. The instruments can peer through clouds and moderate vegetation cover day and night to measure water in the top 2 inches (5 centimeters) of the soil.

To read more on SMAP, go to this [link](#).

## New Groundwater Model Can Help Address Growing Water Demands

The U.S. Geological Survey has developed a computer model that will help water managers understand the groundwater resources in the Willamette Basin, Oregon, and assist them in meeting current and future water demands. The study, done in cooperation with the Oregon Water Resources Department, builds on more than 10 years of data collection and analysis, and is the most in-depth analysis of the groundwater-flow system of the Willamette Basin to date.

The study emphasized the Central Willamette subbasin, which extends from south of Portland to just south of Salem. Groundwater in the subbasin provides water for agriculture, domestic and municipal uses.

The model simulates groundwater flow in aquifers that underlie the Willamette River Valley. Scientists used information about the characteristics of the rocks and sediments that compose the aquifer materials to construct the model.

"We also estimated how much water goes into the aquifer from precipitation and out of the aquifer by way of groundwater discharge to streams and pumping," said USGS hydrologist Nora Herrera, lead scientist for the study.

The model can be used to better understand changes to groundwater flow under different scenarios of pumping and climate change. "The usefulness of groundwater models is that they can be used by water managers to understand groundwater supplies in the future for things like public supply, irrigation, and fish and wildlife," said Erick Burns, another scientist on the study team. "This will be especially important given the population increases and changes in climate that are expected to affect the Willamette Basin in the future."



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The results of the study can be accessed in [U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2014-5136](#). An overview of the study is available [online](#). More information is available at this [link](#).

## Federal News

**10/1:** [EPA Assistance Will Encourage Green Infrastructure, Climate Resiliency in Austin](#)

**10/7:** [EPA announces funding to reduce water pollution, recycle e-waste, improve environmental health along U.S.–Mexico border \(CA\)](#)

**10/8:** [U.S. Department of the Interior and Western municipal water suppliers developing water conservation projects as part of a landmark collaborative agreement](#)

**10/9:** [EPA Announces \\$25 Million to Improve Water Quality, Infrastructure in Arizona \(AZ\)](#)

**10/10:** [President Obama Designates San Gabriel Mountains National Monument](#)

**10/13:** [DoD Releases 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap](#)

**10/21:** [Agriculture, Interior Departments partner to measure conservation impacts on water quality](#)

**10/23:** [Science and Policy Working Together to Help the Delta](#)

**10/24:** [EPA Announces \\$183 Million to Improve Water Quality, Infrastructure in California \(CA\)](#)

**10/27:** [EPA Provides Additional Information on Clean Power Plan/ Agency requests public comment on additional information and proposes carbon goals for areas in Indian Country and U.S. Territories \(HQ\)](#)

**10/28:** [Low-flying Helicopter Surveying Groundwater and Geology in the Poplar River Valley Area, Montana](#)

**10/28:** [San Antonio and EPA Unite to Restore San Antonio River Basin \(TX\)](#)

**10/29:** [Wichitas Water-Use Strategy Helps Preserve the Equus Beds Aquifer](#)

**10/29:** [Subsidence in Southern Colorado Linked to Gas Production and Earthquakes](#)

**10/30:** [WaterSMART Grants Available from Reclamation to Conserve Water and Improve Energy Efficiency](#)

**10/30:** [EPA Releases Climate Plans on Fifth Anniversary of President Obama's Sustainability Initiative/Plan Builds Capacity to Protect Human Health and the Environment in a Changing Climate \(HQ\)](#)

**10/31:** [Reclamation Releases Draft Environmental Documents for the WaterWise Landscape Rebate Program](#)

## State News

**10/15:** [Western Governors' Drought Forum in Arizona targets solutions both simple and intricate to manage impact on mining, industry, manufacturing](#)

**10/16:** [Case Study takes closer look at many uses of Western Governors' Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool](#)

## Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **April 15-17 2015, Spring (177th) Council Meeting**, Tulsa, Oklahoma, The Mayo Hotel
- **July 2015, Summer (178th) Council Meeting**, Lake Tahoe Nevada
- **July 2015, Summer (178th) Council Meeting and WSWC 50th Anniversary**, Lake Tahoe, Nevada

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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