

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.

Membership:

Becky Fulkerson, (Chair)
Reclamation rfulkerson@usbr.gov

Roger Gorke, (Vice Chair), EPA
Gorke.roger@epa.gov

Jean Thomas, Forest Service
jathomas02@fs.fed.us

Dionne Thompson, Reclamation
dethompson@usbr.gov

John D'Antonio, USACE
John.R.D'Antonio@usace.army.mil

Pixie Hamilton, USGS
pahamilt@usgs.gov

Larisa Ford, BLM
laford@blm.gov

Andrew Hautzinger, FWS
Andrew.Hautzinger@fws.gov

Mike Strobel, NRCS
michael.strobel@por.usda.gov

Roger Pulwarty, NOAA
roger.pulwarty@noaa.gov

Brad Doorn, NASA
bradley.doorn@nasa.gov

Craig Zamuda, DOE
Craig.Zamuda@Hq.Doe.Gov

Marc Kodack, DOD
marc.d.kodack.civ@mail.mil

Ed Harvey, NPS
forrest_harvey@nps.gov

Patrick Lambert, Federal Liaison
patlambert@swc.utah.gov



WestFAST News

June 2015

WestFAST to Participate in WSWC Summer Council Meeting & 50th Anniversary Commemoration

The Western States Water Council (WSWC) will hold its 178th Council Meeting in Lake Tahoe, Nevada July 8-10, 2015 and commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the creation of the Council.

Formed through adoption of a resolution at the Western Governors' Conference in 1965, the WSWC has functioned the last 50 years to fulfill its chartered purposes including accomplishing effective cooperation among western states in the conservation, development and management of water resources and providing a forum for the exchange of views, perspectives, and experiences among member states. WestFAST member agencies will join the WSWC in the anniversary commemoration and agency scientists and managers will make presentations to the Council on a range of water resource topics.

Jennifer Gimbel, the Department of the Interior's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science and past WSWC member, will address the Council on Friday July 10th and discuss the Department's Water Resource Programs. WestFAST team members and agency representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration will also brief the Council during committee meetings on July 9th. Patrick Lambert, WestFAST Federal Liaison to the WSWC and Becky Fulkerson with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and WestFAST Chair will review ongoing WestFAST activities and the WestFAST 2015-2017 Work Plan.

Find meeting information and agendas on the [WSWC webpage](#).

U.S. Forest Service Withdraws Proposed Groundwater Directive

On June 19th, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) withdrew a proposed directive on groundwater resource management and announced it would hold public discussions on

ways it might improve groundwater management on lands it oversees instead.

The proposed amending of the USFS directive, announced in May, 2014, was intended to provide internal Agency direction on the consideration of groundwater resources in Agency activities, approvals, and authorizations; encourage source water protection and water conservation; establish systematic procedures for reviewing new proposals for groundwater withdrawals on National Forest System (NFS) lands; and require the evaluation of potential impacts from groundwater withdrawals on public resources on NFS lands.

Supplementing the notice of withdrawal of the proposal to amend the directives in the *Federal Registry*, Thomas L. Tidwell, Chief of the USFS, wrote that "the Agency has determined that its proposal does not adequately meet its needs," and that the USFS would "engage in a public conversation to develop revised proposed directives."

Mr. Tidwell noted that "the response to the proposal from conservation organizations and Tribes was generally favorable; however, States and a number of other organizations raised concerns that the proposed directive would exceed the Agency's authorities and infringe on State authorities to allocate water." Mr. Tidwell added that "the proposed directives did not, and any future actions will not, infringe on State authority, impose requirements on private landowners, or change the long-standing relationship between the Forest Service, States, and Tribes on water." The intent of any new groundwater proposed directive or next steps, Tidwell wrote, "would be to establish a clearer and more consistent approach to evaluating and monitoring the effects of actions on groundwater resources of the National Forest System." Mr. Tidwell concluded stating that that "it is clear the Agency must have further discussions with key publics on this issue."

The USFS will use the additional input received from future discussions with States and other groups to develop new proposed directives to create a consistent approach to evaluating and monitoring effects to groundwater resulting from actions on NFS lands.

The USFS had met in February 2015 with the with WSWC representatives to discuss the proposed directive and the WSWC's related concerns and comments, as set forth in an [October 3, 2015 WSWC letter to the USFS](#). The meeting served as an opportunity for the



WSWC and the USFS to identify areas of possible common ground regarding the directive. During the February meeting, the USFS and the WSWC jointly reviewed concepts in the directive and identified areas where consensus may be possible. Both the USFS and the WSWC wish to continue these discussions as the USFS moves forward.

Go to this [link](#) to read more about the USFS Groundwater Program.

DOI, USDA, EPA, NOAA and USACE Announce Additional Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative Sites to Prepare Natural Resources for Climate Change

(EPA, June 24)

The Department of the Interior (DOI), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on June 24th recognized three new collaborative landscape partnerships across the country where Federal agencies will focus efforts with partners to conserve and restore important lands and waters and make them more resilient to a changing climate. These include the California Headwaters, California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, and Crown of the Continent.

Building on existing collaborations, these Resilient Lands and Waters partnerships – located in California and Montana/British Columbia – will help build the resilience of valuable natural resources and the people, businesses and communities that depend on them in regions vulnerable to climate change and related challenges. They will also showcase the benefits of landscape-scale management approaches and help enhance the carbon storage capacity of these natural areas.

The selected lands and waters face a wide range of climate impacts and other ecological stressors related to climate change, including drought, wildfire, sea level rise, species migration and invasive species. At each location, Federal agencies will work closely with state, tribal, and local partners to prepare for and prevent these and other threats, and ensure that long-term conservation efforts take climate change into account.

These new Resilient Lands and Waters sites follow President Obama's [announcement](#) of the first set of Resilient Landscape partnerships (southwest Florida, Hawaii, Washington and the Great Lakes region) at the 2015 Earth Day event in the Everglades.

Efforts in all Resilient Lands and Waters regions are relying on an approach that addresses the needs of the entire landscape. Over the next 18 months, Federal, state, local, and tribal partners will work together in these landscapes to develop more explicit strategies and maps in their programs of work. Developing these strategies will benefit wildfire management, mitigation investments, restoration efforts, water and air quality, carbon storage, and the communities that depend upon natural systems for their own resilience. By tracking successes and sharing lessons learned, the initiative will encourage the development of similar resilience efforts in other areas

across the country.

In the California Headwaters, for example, an area that contributes greatly to state's water supply, the partnership will build upon and



The Russian River meanders through Mendocino and Sonoma counties in Northern California mountains and meets the Pacific Ocean at Jenner, California. (Credit: NOAA)

unify existing collaborative efforts to identify areas for restoration that will help improve water quality and quantity, promote healthy forests, and reduce wildfire risk. In California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, partners will explore methods to improve flood risk reduction and water supply reliability, restore habitats, and inform coastal and ocean resource management efforts. In Montana, extending into British Columbia, the Crown of the Continent partnership will focus on identifying critical areas for building habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience to help ensure the long-term health and integrity of this landscape.

Learn more information about the three [selected landscapes](#) (California Headwaters, California's North-Central Coast and Russian River Watershed, and Crown of the Continent)

The Bureau of Reclamation Announces the Latest in a Series of River Basin Studies

(USBR, June 12)

The Bureau of Reclamation on June 12, 2015 announced the latest in a series of river basin studies that examine the growing imbalance between available supply, increasing needs and projected demand due to climate change in the western United States.

Studies have been completed in the Colorado River Basin, Lower Rio Grande, Milk-St. Mary Rivers, Santa Ana Watershed, Yakima River and the most recently completed Henrys Fork Basin in southeastern Idaho.

"Basin Studies are an important tool for Reclamation and its partners to have a clear understanding of the projected demands and supplies in local basins in the West," Reclamation Commissioner Estevan López said. "Through collaboration, proposed solutions are developed to close the gap between supply and demand, especially in the light of climate change."

The Henrys Fork of the Snake River, located in eastern Idaho, provides irrigation water for more than 280,000 acres, sustains a world-class trout fishery and is home for native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.



The purpose of this basin study is to assist state and local planning efforts by exploring options for meeting the complex water supply and management challenges in the basin, meeting the goals of the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan and Idaho State Water Plan, as well as identifying risks posed to water supply by climate change and opportunities to mitigate those risks.

Reclamation and the Idaho Water Resource Board prepared the Henrys Fork Basin Study while working with the Henrys Fork Watershed Council. The Henrys Fork Basin Study final report includes alternatives, which provide the Idaho Water Resource Board, and other interested stakeholders including conservation groups, irrigators, and other agencies options to meet the water demands in the future.

This basin study was conducted as part of WaterSMART. WaterSMART is the U.S. Department of the Interior's sustainable water initiative that uses the best available science to improve water conservation and help water resource managers identify strategies to narrow the gap between supply and demand.

Basin studies are comprehensive water studies that define options for meeting future water demands in river basins in the western United States where imbalances in water supply and demand exist or are projected to exist. Through these studies, Reclamation collaborates with non-federal cost-share partners to help ensure sustainable water supplies in the West.

EPA Releases Draft Assessment on the Potential Impacts to Drinking Water Resources from Hydraulic Fracturing Activities *(EPA, June 4)*

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a draft assessment June 4, 2015 on the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing activities on drinking water resources in the United States. The assessment, done at the request of Congress, shows that while hydraulic fracturing activities in the U.S. are carried out in a way that have not led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water resources, there are potential vulnerabilities in the water lifecycle that could impact drinking water. The assessment follows the water used for hydraulic fracturing from water acquisition, chemical mixing at the well pad site, well injection of fracking fluids, the collection of hydraulic fracturing wastewater.

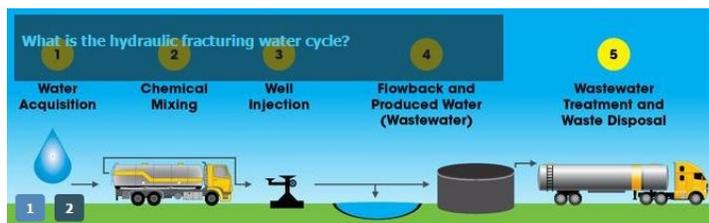
"EPA's draft assessment will give state regulators, tribes and local communities and industry around the country a critical resource to identify how best to protect public health and their drinking water resources," said Dr. Thomas A. Burke, EPA's Science Advisor and Deputy Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Research and Development. "It is the most complete compilation of scientific data to date, including over 950 sources of information, published papers, numerous technical reports, information from stakeholders and peer-reviewed EPA scientific reports."

EPA's review of data sources available to the agency found specific instances where well integrity and waste water management related

to hydraulic fracturing activities impacted drinking water resources, but they were small compared to the large number of hydraulically fractured wells across the country. The report provides valuable information about potential vulnerabilities, some of which are not unique to hydraulic fracturing, to drinking water resources, but was not designed to be a list of documented impacts.

Also released were nine peer-reviewed EPA scientific reports. These reports were a part of EPA's overall hydraulic fracturing drinking water study and contributed to the findings outlined in the draft assessment. Over 20 peer-reviewed articles or reports were published as part of this study

EPA's draft assessment benefited from extensive stakeholder en-



Click on the above cartoon illustrating the assessment components of the study of hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas and its potential impact on drinking water resources to access study products and reports.

agement conducted across the country with states, tribes, industry, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and the public to ensure that the draft assessment reflects current practices in hydraulic fracturing and utilizes all data and information available to the agency.

The study will be finalized after review by the Science Advisory Board and public review and comment.

Federal News

5/28: [Heat Accelerates Dry in California Drought](#)

6/3: [Rebuilding Sandbars in the Grand Canyon](#)

6/10: [6 Facts about Human-Caused Earthquakes](#)

6/12 - [Basin Studies Provide Options for Communities to Meet Future Water Needs in the Western United States](#)

6/22: [EPA Report: For the US, Global Action Now Saves Lives and Avoids Significant Climate Change Damages](#)

6/24: [In Hot Water: Climate Change Reaches Underwater & Impacts Freshwater Fisheries](#)

6/24: [CA, MT Sites Added to Climate Change Resiliency Partnership](#)

6/24: [Interior Announces Latest \\$6.5 Million in Grant Funding to Help Relieve Drought in California](#)

6/25 - [NOAA announces more than \\$25 million in grants to improve fishing opportunities, observations, resiliency and](#)



sustainability

6/30: Water Used for Hydraulic Fracturing Varies Widely Across United States

State News

6/16: Drought Update: Recent heavy rain may delay Lake Mead water cuts

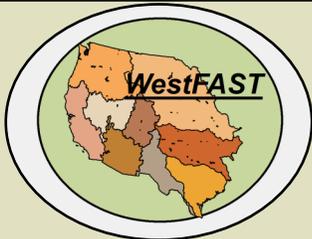
6/23: Western Governors' Drought Forum meeting wraps up first year, looks ahead

6/25: Western Governors approve policy resolutions on transportation, enhanced oil recovery, agriculture, water resource management, minerals

6/29: WGA Annual Meeting Recap: Resolutions, drought report, Chairman's Initiative on ESA

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **July 8-10, 2015, Summer (178th) Council Meeting and WSWC 50th Anniversary**, Lake Tahoe, Nevada
- **August 25-27, 2015, WSWC/NARF Symposium on the Settlement of Indian Reserved Water Rights Claims**, Reno, Nevada



WestFAST News is published monthly. To get an Agency Announcement published or to get added to the WestFAST News distribution list contact:
Patrick M. Lambert, WestFAST Federal Liaison
Email: patlambert@wswc.utah.gov
Phone: 801-685-2555

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