

**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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## New WestFAST Liaison

Roger Pierce, Meteorologist-in-Charge of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) Office in San Diego, California, has been selected as the new WestFAST Liaison.



*Roger Pierce, NOAA*

Prior to running the routine operations of the San Diego office, Mr. Pierce was Senior Meteorologist to the Director of NOAA Research from 2001-2011. In that capacity, Mr. Pierce worked with many researchers on weather observations and forecasting programs, including the Physical Sciences Division of the NOAA Earth Systems Research Laboratory on Seasonal to Sub-seasonal forecast and the Hydrometeorological Testbed in the western United States.

Mr. Pierce's early career from 1985-2001, was based in hydrometeorology services, as he served in a number of positions including: National Service Hydrologist in NWS Headquarters; Hydrologist at the Weather Forecast Office in Honolulu; Hydrometeorologist Instructor at the Radar Operations Center in Norman, OK and COMET programs in Boulder, CO; River Forecast Center Hydrologist in Tulsa, OK; and NWS Hydrologist at the Weather Forecast Office in Chicago, IL.

Mr. Pierce is looking forward to working with WestFAST, which was formed in 2008 to develop a collaborative working relationship between the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and the federal agencies with water related missions. WestFAST agencies, including NOAA, agreed to collectively support a federal employee from one of the WestFAST agencies on a rotating basis to support WestFAST agencies and their efforts to collaborate with the WSWC and the western states. Liaisons have been competitively selected from GS14 and GS15 ranks within WestFAST agencies for a two year assignment. Mr. Pierce is the fifth WestFAST liaison and will be stationed in the WSWC office, which is located in Murray, Utah. He has big shoes to fill from the excellent work that Pat Lambert, outgoing WestFAST Liaison, provided.

## Pat Lambert Returns to USGS - Denver

Patrick Lambert, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), completed his 2-year assignment as the WestFAST Federal Liaison to the WSWC in September 2016. Although leaving the liaison role, Mr. Lambert will remain engaged in WestFAST as one of the USGS's two WestFAST team members.

Mr. Lambert returns to the USGS as a Senior Science Advisor in the USGS Southwest Region, Head Quarters in Denver, Colorado. He will also be working as a member of the USGS Water Availability and Use Science Program ([WAUSP](#)) Leadership Team, overseeing the program's "[Focus Area Studies](#)" throughout the Nation, and representing the [WAUSP Nation Water Census](#) program to western states.

Upon completion of his WestFAST Liaison assignment, Mr. Lambert stated that he felt the experience to have been "invaluable" to him and the USGS "in the development of new collaborative working relationships among western states and the water-resource federal family." He also expressed his hope that his service had, "likewise, been of help to the Western States Water Council and to WestFAST in our ongoing efforts to collaboratively address the increasing challenges of water management in the west."



*Pat Lambert, USGS*

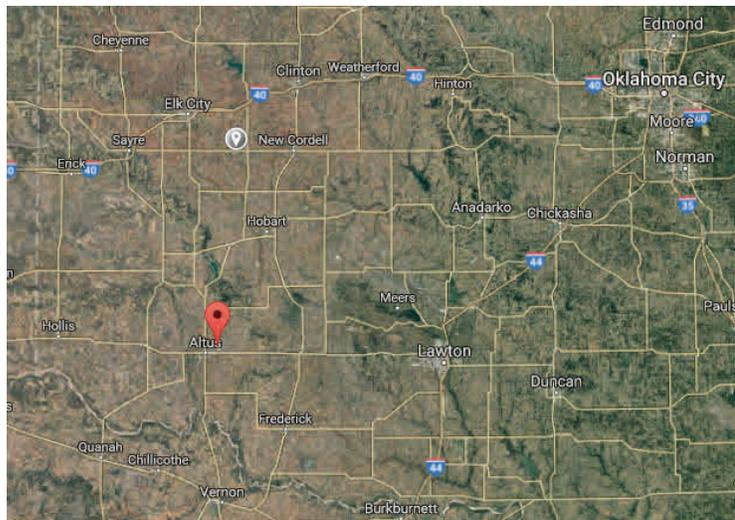
## WestFAST Begins Monthly Coordination Calls with Southwest Oklahoma Water Action Plan (*WestFAST*, 12/19)

The Southwest Oklahoma Water Action Plan (SOWAP) was originally developed for the Altus, Oklahoma area during a historic drought that started around 2011 and continued into 2016. The area was quickly running low on water sources for agriculture, the general population, and for the nearby Altus Airforce Base (AFB). The plan was designed to take quick action to ensure a supplement water supply was secured, a middle range set of goals for 3-5 year, then a long-term set of goals were designed. The SOWAP as designed, used many State, local and Federal



resources, including many of the WestFAST agencies.

The development of the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP) in 2016 was designed, with projects such as the SOWAP in



Altus, Oklahoma - Google Maps

mind. The SOWAP is an example of where Federal, State, local, and government sectors can work together to prepare communities to become more drought resilient. WestFAST wants to ensure these types of programs and projects get full attention and have asked Oklahoma if they can help in fostering additional coordination for SOWAP, as it evolves to better address long-term goals. In addition, the WSWC would like to make sure that lessons learned are passed on throughout the western United States.

Roger Gorke, WestFAST Chair, kicked off the discussion with basic information about the WestFAST and the NDRP. The key to this call was to introduce key players in the SOWAP and WestFAST. Julie Cunningham, Acting Director of Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB), discussed some of the main points of the SOWAP – The history of the plan goes to water needs in Southwest Oklahoma. Owen Mills, also with the OWRB, outlined a few things that had already taken place in Southwest Oklahoma to mitigate the drought. Brian Bush, President and CEO of the Altus Chamber of Commerce (Duane Martin and Jed Winters were also linked in this part of the conversation with Altus, Ok), explained that the city and its nearby partners realized that the lack of water in the area would be a limiting factor in the development and long-term growth of the area. The drought forced the development of a task force to look at water issues. They decided it was in their best interest to work on a project to help improve water availability for the region.

Duane Smith, Altus, OK, is support scientist on the development of the SOWAP as they went through to look at all the water resources in the area and documented ways of moving forward with a plan. Some of the water resources included improved use of the Tom Steed Reservoir, improve ground water resources, water storage and treatment facilities and explore the use of marginal quality water and water reuse capabilities.

Federal partners involved early on, included: Bureau of Reclamation

(BOR); USGS; NOAA; and Department of Defense (via Altus AFB); and others. In bringing together a larger group with WestFAST, it added additional experience and ideas.

John D'Antonio, Deputy District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and WestFAST member, discussed some of the projects that USACE was engaged in. Andrew Hautzinger, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and WestFAST member, noted that the nearby Wichita Mountains Refuge is near this area and there are linkages to this project. Tony Willardson, WSWC Executive Director, and others, added reservoir sedimentation to the list and ongoing projects that could link to some issues in Southwest Oklahoma.

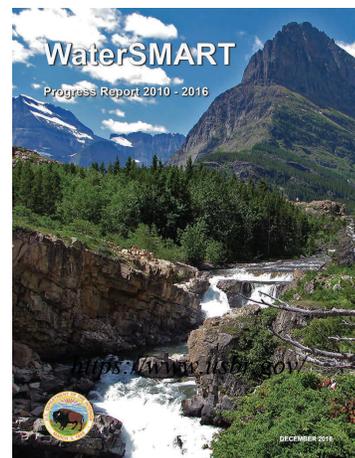


Tom Steed Reservoir - travelok.com

Collins Balcomb, BOR, described how these projects fit well into programs the BOR has engaged in the past, and is currently doing with this project. Pat Lambert, USGS, added the WaterSmart Program could be another thing to add to the list along with ground-water modeling work the USGS is currently engaged in through Oklahoma and Texas. Action items, including setting up monthly calls are planned to continue the collaboration on this project.

## USACE Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Rule on Reservoir Projects (USACE 12/16/16)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is seeking comments on a proposed rule to update and clarify its policies governing the use of USACE reservoir projects for domestic, municipal and industrial water supply pursuant to



[Link: WaterSMART](#)



Section 6 of the Flood Control Act of 1944, 33 U.S.C. § 708 (Section 6), and the Water Supply Act of 1958, 43 U.S.C. § 390b (WSA). Specifically, USACE proposes to define key terms under both statutes and to respond to issues that have arisen in exercising these authorities in order to take into account court decisions, legislative provisions, and other developments.

The proposed rule is intended to enhance USACE's ability to cooperate with state and local interests in the development of water supplies in connection with the operation of its reservoirs for federal purposes as authorized by Congress, to facilitate water supply uses of USACE reservoirs by others as contemplated under applicable law, and to avoid interfering with lawful uses of water by any entity when USACE exercises its discretionary authority under either Section 6 or the WSA.

USACE intends to initiate a positive dialogue with stakeholders on these important issues, and to promote program certainty and efficiency by ultimately establishing a uniform understanding of Section 6 and the WSA, and the range of activity authorized thereunder.



*USACE Southwest Division*

The release of the proposed rule follows through on USACE's commitment to establish clearer and more consistent policies in this area in cooperation with the public.

### **Purpose of Proposed Rule:**

The proposed rule seeks to clarify: USACE understanding of the congressional intent behind Section 6 and the WSA; define key statutory terms; more clearly delineate the authority conferred under each statute; and establish policies that would improve efficiency and coordination with states, federal agencies and other stakeholders regarding water supply uses of USACE reservoirs. The proposed rule would also explain the USACE approach to important policy questions that have arisen nationwide, including the pricing of surplus water agreements under Section 6, the reallocation of storage under the WSA, and accounting of storage usage and return flows under WSA agreements, and would solicit public input and comments on those subjects.

### **Basic Features of Proposed Rule:**

\*Explanation of the purpose and scope of the authority conferred under Section 6 and the WSA, including the water supply uses that may be accommodated, and statutory limits on USACE's authority to include storage for water supply.

\*Definitions interpreting key statutory terms, including "surplus water."

\*Pricing methodologies for surplus water contracts under Section 6, and for water supply storage agreements under the WSA.

\*Provisions to simplify and streamline USACE administrative processes for authorizing surplus water withdrawals.

\*Provisions to clarify the amount of water that may be withdrawn under water supply storage agreements and procedures to account for water supply uses.

\*Provisions to ensure coordination of proposed water supply actions with states, tribes, federal agencies and the public.

The proposed rule is administrative in nature and applies only to USACE actions pursuant to Section 6 and the WSA, and not under any other authority. It would apply prospectively and only to reservoir projects operated by USACE, not to projects operated by other federal or non-federal entities. It would not impose requirements on any other entity, alter existing contractual arrangements at USACE reservoirs, or require operational changes at any USACE reservoir.

USACE encourages all interested persons to carefully review the preamble and the proposed rule and to offer comments for consideration. USACE looks forward to a constructive dialogue with all interested stakeholders. The public comment period on the proposed rule lasts for 60-days and ends February 14, 2017. The proposed rule, along with instructions for submitting comments, is available at <http://www.regulations.gov>, Docket ID number COE-2016-0016. Gene Pawlik, (202) 761-7690. Eugene.A.Pawlik@usace.army.mil or Doug Garman, (202) 761-1807, doug.M.Garman@usace.army.mil.

## **EPA's National Assessment Finds Nutrient Pollution is Widespread in Lakes** (EPA 12/08/16)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released the results of a national assessment showing that nutrient pollution is widespread in the nation's lakes, with 4 in 10 lakes suffering from too much nitrogen and phosphorus. Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms, lower oxygen levels, degraded habitat for fish and other life, and lower water quality for recreation. The National Lakes Assessment also found an algal toxin – microcystin – in 39% of lakes, but below levels of concern. Low concentrations of the herbicide atrazine were found in 30% of lakes.

"America's lakes and reservoirs provide many environmental and public health benefits; we use lakes for drinking water, energy, food and recreation, and our fish, birds, and wildlife depend on lakes for habitat," said Joel Beauvais, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water at EPA. "The National Lakes Assessment provides us with valuable information to help protect and restore our lakes across the country."

The assessment is part of a series of National Aquatic Resource Surveys designed to provide information about the condition of water resources in the United States. The surveys are conducted in partnership with states and tribes to provide national-scale assessments of the nation's waters.



*Continue from page 3—EPA*

An earlier National Lakes Assessment was conducted in 2007, but this latest study is expanded to include smaller lakes and increase the number of lakes assessed. Lake managers can use the new interactive dashboard to evaluate site-specific information and to explore population-level results. Conducted on a five-year basis, future lake surveys will help water resource managers assess broad-scale differences in the data and perform trends analyses.

Nutrient pollution is one of America's most widespread and costly environmental and public health challenges. EPA is working on many fronts to reduce the severity, extent, and impacts of nutrient pollution in our nation's lakes and other waters. These efforts involve overseeing regulatory programs, conducting outreach and engaging partners, providing technical and programmatic support to states, financing nutrient reduction activities, and conducting research and development. In September, EPA called upon states and stakeholders to intensify their efforts to reduce nutrient pollution in collaboration with EPA. See [EPA's website](#).



*Blue-Green Algae Kansas Lake St. Joseph Post*

## **Federal News** ( *Control click to access articles* )

**[12/7: TODAY: EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy to Address American Water Summit](#)**

**[12/8: EPA Grant Will Help Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program Restore Texas Coastal Habitats](#)**

**[12/08: Bureau of Reclamation Releases Water Markets Report](#)**

**[12/12: U.S. Had its Warmest Autumn and 2nd Warmest November on Record](#)**

**[12/13: Reclamation Announces Water Management Plan Standard Criteria Revision for 2017](#)**

**[12/15: WaterSMART Funding Opportunity Available from Bureau of Reclamation for On-the-Ground Watershed Management Projects](#)**

**[12/16: USDA Invests \\$33 Million to Improve Water Quality in High-Priority Watersheds](#)**

**[12/19: Agencies Begin Work on Treasure Valley Groundwater-Flow Model](#)**

**[12/20: Crossing Borders for a Secure Water Future: US-Mexico San Pedro River Aquifer Report](#)**

**[22/20: NOAA Awards \\$8 Million for Coastal Resiliency Investments Across the Nation](#)**

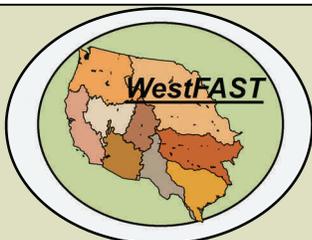
**[12/21: Bruce Ludington Retires with a Federal Columbia River Power System Hydro Hero Award](#)**

**[12/21: USGS Releases Results of Gem County Groundwater Quality Study](#)**

**[12/22: BOR Final Environmental Documents for WaterFix Released](#)**

## **Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events**

4/12-14 - [Spring 2017 \(183rd\) Council Meetings](#), Nebraska City, Nebraska.



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>