

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:

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

Kevin Werner, (Vice Chair), NOAA,
kevin.werner@noaa.gov

Becky Fulkerson, Reclamation
rfulkerson@usbr.gov

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

Dionne Thompson, Reclamation
dethompson@usbr.gov

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

Sonya Jones, USGS
sajones@usgs.gov

Ronald McCormick, BLM
rmccormi@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 Meets with WSWC in Bismarck ND

(WSWC, 7/18, and WestFAST)

On July 13-15, the WSWC held its 181st meetings in Bismarck, North Dakota. The meetings included the election of new officers with the WSWC selecting Jerry Rigby of Idaho as Chair, Jeanine Jones of California as Vice-Chair, and J.D. Strong of Oklahoma as Secretary-Treasurer.

WestFAST agency participation in the meetings included Kevin Werner, Director, Office of Organizational Excellence, National Weather Service, and WestFAST Vice Chair, providing an update on drought, precipitation anomalies, snowpack and melt, and improvements in short-term weather forecasting, climate modeling, and sub-seasonal to seasonal precipitation forecasting.



Jerry Rigby, Idaho Attorney, selected as new Chair of the Western States Water Council

Patrick Lambert, WestFAST Liaison, gave a presentation on current and future uses of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) bandwidth to provide water and meteorological data through the Geospatial Orbiting Environmental Satellite (GOES) radio spectrum. Expanded use of the spectrum may result in commercial signals that could "bleed over" and interfere with reception of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) water data downlinked to the USGS Emergency Data Distribution Networks, NOAA downlinks and other federally and state owned ground stations. Mr. Lambert reported that there is no expectation by the USGS of near-term loss of GOES services but the agency is exploring secure alternative means of transmitting and processing real-time water data from field network gages, monitoring stations, and ground-water wells for the long-term.

Joel Galloway, Acting Director, USGS North Dakota Water Science Center, addressed the importance of flood science in North Dakota, with a 50-year trend of increasing peak flows to the East and decreasing to the West. The State has over 100 years of data on stream flow, and has a state-wide network to monitor water quality. The science, funded by ten federal, state and local agencies, supports flood management strategies and identifies the effects of dam management on channel morphology in the Missouri River.

Other WestFAST briefings during the two-day WSWC meeting included Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff on the results of recent and ongoing studies of the effects of hydraulic fracturing on water supply quality. EPA also joined USGS staff in a discussion of WSWC comments on their joint draft report, "Protecting Aquatic Life from Effects of Hydrologic Alteration."

WSWC/WestFAST Hold Workshop on Federal Groundwater Needs (WSWC, 7/18)

On July 13, the WSWC-WestFAST Non-Tribal Federal Water Rights Workgroup hosted a workshop on groundwater and meeting federal water needs. Participants discussed: (1) ways to preserve unique water features on federal lands; (2) primary and secondary purposes of federal reservations and related water needs; (3) building successful relationships; (4) finding solutions that work; and (5) state-federal workshops or symposia that can improve understanding and communication.

Tony Willardson, WSWC Executive Director, provided a state-tribal background to highlight the value of negotiated settlements over protracted litigation. He noted the importance of understanding not only the state and federal laws, but also the need for scientific and technical information for well-informed decisions.

Barbara Cosens, Professor and Associate Dean of Faculty, University of Idaho College of Law and Interim Director, Institute for Waters of the West, provided an overview of the Montana-National Park Service efforts to create the Yellowstone Controlled Groundwater Area. Norm Johnson, WSWC member and Utah Assistant Attorney General, discussed the negotiation of federal reserved water rights claims and the groundwater protection zone at Arches National Park. Peter Fahmy, Policy Analyst, Water Resources Division, National Park Service, presented the unique features at the Great Sand Dunes National Park and the local concerns that made protection of the monument possible.

Fred Price, Water Rights Specialist, BLM Idaho State Office, described the challenge of proving beneficial use of groundwater and constructing range improvements for stock watering purposes. Meg Estep, Fish and Wildlife Service, talked about the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and agricultural groundwater pumping that is impacting instream flows. Jody Miller, Senior Counsel, U.S. Department of Agriculture, addressed the instream flow rights covered by the Montana-USFS Com-



fact, and how the parties overcame various challenges.

WSWC briefs USGS Water Availability and Use Science Program on their Water Data Exchange (WaDE)

In 2012 the WSWC began a cooperative effort to create a framework where states could share water data with each other and the public in a streamlined and cost-effective way. The resulting Water Data Exchange or WaDE project seeks to provide better access to water allocation, supply, and demand data that are maintained by state and other governmental agencies. WaDE is a cooperative effort between the WSWC, the Western Governors' Association (WGA), the Department of Energy (DOE), and WestFAST.

WestFAST has facilitated exploring the linkage of WaDE activities with the National Water Census, a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) research program on national water availability. To help ensure information is being shared between these two efforts, Sara Larsen, WSWC WaDE program manager, has participated in strategy and planning meetings of the USGS Water Availability and Use Science Program (WAUSP) leadership team. During the WAUSP most recent leadership team meeting in Augusta, Maine July 26-28, Ms. Larsen briefed team members on the progress of the WaDE framework and presented

samples of western state water supply and water use data now streaming to WaDE. Patrick Lambert, WestFAST federal Liaison, who also attended the meeting, discussed the potential long-term utility of WaDE to WAUSP program including the program's 5-year water-use compilations process.



Click the image above to view a presentation on the WSWC Water Data Exchange Program

Mr. Lambert reported that WestFAST "will continue to support the WSWC in the development of this central data portal to help synthesize and visualize state and federal water data. As part their current action plan" Lambert noted, WestFAST will continue to engage and coordinate with the USGS Water Census to ensure that WaDE is complementary to that effort and to test and optimize data sharing between Water Census data bases and WaDE.

Jean Thomas, US Forest Service's WestFAST Representative Retires

Long-time WestFAST representative and past WestFAST Chair Jean Thomas, USDA U.S Forest Service (USFS) Water Uses Program Leader retired on June 10, after 32 years of service, most recently as the USFS National Water Rights Leader. A hydrologist with a masters degree in geology from the University of Montana,

she worked in a number of positions involving natural resources and environmental science and policy. Ms. Thomas served as WestFAST Chair in 2012-2013 and has been a valued member of the team since 2008. She was instrumental in the establishment of the WSWC/WestFAST Non-Tribal Federal Water Rights Work Group.



Jean Thomas, USFS WestFAST representative and past WestFAST Chair

The WSWC has officially recognized, through a council resolution, Ms. Thomas' accomplishments and contributions to the wise use and management of western resources and sustainable water supplies in the West and wish her the best in retirement.

New Public-Private Partnership to Help Reduce Wildfire Threat on Family-Owned Lands, Protect Water Supply for Millions of Westerners (USFS, 6/28)

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced a new partnership with the American Forest Foundation (AFF), and a combined \$5 million initial investment, to address catastrophic wildfire risk across 3.5 million acres of private land in order to protect water supplies for Western communities.

"With the threat of longer and less predictable fire seasons, we can't take our attention off the need to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and restore health to our forests," stated USFS Chief Tom Tidwell. "Collaborating with private and family landholders to conduct this critical restoration work reduces the threat of wildfires to our communities and protects lives and property."

"A significant portion of the West's water supplies, for both drinking water and agricultural uses, originates in or passes through forested watersheds," said Jason Weller, Chief of NRCS. "Catastrophic wildfires pose a significant risk to both water quality and quantity for our communities. We're excited to launch a public-private partnership that engages the forestland owners and managers that are committed to voluntarily restoring and improving healthy forestland conditions. Voluntary conservation on these private lands will not only reduce the wildfire threat, but will go a long way towards securing water supplies for more than 22 million Westerners."

AFF, a national forest conservation organization, specializes in conservation and stewardship on private and family lands, working through partners to help landowners keep their forests producing the resources Americans count on - clean water, wildlife habitat and sustainable wood supplies.

Last fall, AFF released a report, [Western Water Threatened by Wildfire](#) that examined the ownership patterns of high wildfire risk lands in important watersheds that help supply clean water. The analysis found that across the West nearly 40 percent of the high wildfire risk acres in these key watersheds are actually on private and family-owned land. Further analysis found that the majority



(81 percent) of the risk on private lands, or 3.5 million acres, is concentrated in specific landscapes across just 16 percent of western counties.

This new public-private partnership will provide \$5 million in funding to support work in six priority landscapes across the West, aiming to restore more than 11,000 acres in the first two years. A portion of the funds will help AFF, a leading expert on reaching and engaging landowners, and partners including state forestry agencies, conduct outreach and education to 17,500 private and family landowners in important water supply watersheds. These funds leverage other federal and state investments for forest restoration. The remainder of the funds will provide cost-share dollars directly to landowners in one of the project landscapes, the Upper South Platte Watershed in Colorado.

Projects associated with partnership include:

Upper South Platte Watershed, Colorado: A five-county landscape southwest of Denver, comprised of mixed ownership that supplies roughly one-third of Colorado residents with their drinking water.

Rocky Mountain Front, Montana: A two-county landscape across mixed ownership at the headwaters of the Missouri River and primary water source for the Great Falls area.

Blue Mountains, Oregon: Four northeastern counties of Oregon, a mix of range and forest land across ownership types and whose waters support the farming, ranching and salmon populations.

Sierra Nevada region, California: A two-county (Mariposa and Tuolumne) mixed-ownership landscape that contributes to the drinking water for several California city centers.

California: An additional project will be selected in California, a state where nearly 3 of every 5 acres at high risk from wildfire in important watersheds are privately owned.

Four Corners States (AZ, CO, NW, UT): An additional project will be selected in this region where more than 600,000 privately-owned acres in important water supply watersheds, merit forest restoration.

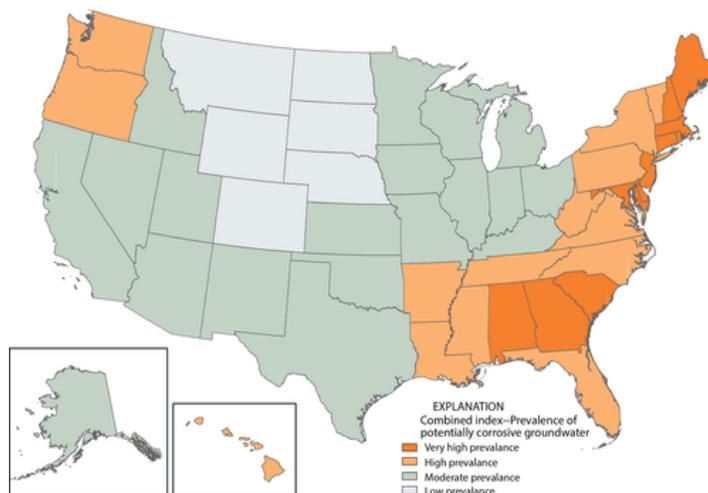
New Study Shows High Potential for Groundwater to be Corrosive in Half of U.S. States *(USGS, 7/23)*

A new U.S. Geological Survey assessment of more than 20,000 wells nationwide shows that untreated groundwater in 25 states has a high prevalence of being potentially corrosive. The states with the largest percentage of wells with potentially corrosive groundwater are located primarily in the Northeast, the Southeast, and the Northwest.

This report is unrelated to the drinking water problems experienced in Flint, Michigan. The problems in Flint were related to treated surface-water from the Flint River, whereas this report focuses on

untreated groundwater nationwide.

Two indicators of potential corrosivity were combined to determine that corrosive groundwater occurs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Corrosive groundwater, if untreated, can dissolve lead and other metals from pipes and plumbing fixtures.



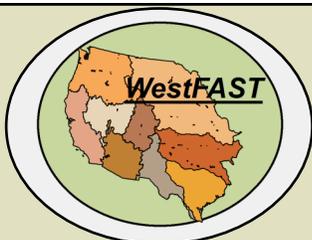
Map showing the potential for groundwater corrosivity in groundwater wells in all 50 states. Click the figure for a larger view of the map and to access the complete report. Click the figure above for a larger view of the map and to access the complete report.

“The corrosivity of untreated groundwater is only one of several factors that may affect the quality of household drinking water at the tap,” said Stephen Moulton II, chief, USGS National Water-Quality Program. “Nevertheless, it is an essential factor that should be carefully considered in testing for water quality in both public and private supplies nationwide.”

Public water supplies are regulated by the U.S. EPA, but maintenance, testing and treatment of private water supplies are the sole responsibility of the homeowner. About 44 million people in the U.S. get their drinking water from private wells, yet surveys indicate many homeowners are unaware of some basic testing that should be done to help ensure safe drinking water in the home.

“Fortunately, in most areas of the country and with appropriate safeguards, the majority of homeowners can get good quality drinking water from private wells,” said Moulton. “But this study is a good reminder that prudent, routine testing of the water, including its interaction with the water supply system, is an essential first step so homeowners and their families can confidently drink water from their faucets.”

Naturally corrosive water is not dangerous to consume by itself, however it can cause health-related problems by reacting with pipes and plumbing fixtures in homes. If plumbing materials con-



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>



tain lead or copper, these metals may be leached into the water supply by corrosive water. galvanized steel that contained 0.5 to 1.4 percent lead, prior to 2014

Additional information on groundwater quality monitoring and modeling is available on the [USGS National Water-Quality Assessment project website](#). A new USGS [online mapper](#) provides a decadal look at groundwater quality.

WSWC to Hold Workshop on Agriculture Weather Station Networks

On August 25-26, WSWC and the California Department of Water Resources will co-sponsor a workshop on agricultural weather station networks used for providing irrigation scheduling information to growers and municipal landscape managers. Accurate estimates of evapotranspiration allow growers and landscape managers to improve water use efficiency by precisely scheduling irrigation to provide only the amount of water needed. WSWC will collect information and prepare a report on the status of existing networks, challenges in maintaining data coverage, data gaps, and opportunities for strengthening collection of this important data.

Forrest Melton, NASA, Applied Sciences Program, and WestFAST member will discuss applications of the California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) Reference ET and Satellite Data to Support Irrigation Scheduling and Management. Jim Prarie and Jama Hamel, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, will brief attendees on the Pacific Northwest Agrimet, Great Plains, and Upper Colorado River Basin Agrimet systems.

Click [here](#) for more information on this workshop.

Federal News

6/1: [Army Corps of Engineers Seeks Public Comments on Proposal to Renew and Revise Nationwide Permits](#)

7/7: [Reclamation is Seeking Non-Federal Partners to Help Launch Prize Competitions](#)

7/11: [NOAA Blog: Tackling America's water challenges with science](#)

7/13: [Interior Department and Navajo Nation to Develop Plan for Contingency Water Supplies for Navajo Farms](#)

7/18: [Water Quality Nearly Unchanged by Artificial Recharge Activities in Wichita](#)

7/18: [Landsat—The Watchman that Never Sleeps](#)

7/19: [June marks 14 consecutive months of record heat for the globe](#)

7/19: [2016 Climate Trends Continue to Break Records](#)

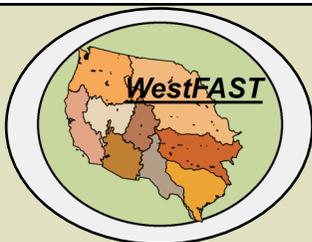
7/20: [Groundwater Discharge to Upper Colorado River Basin Varies in Response to Drought](#)

State News

7/12: [WGA—Drought Update: California sitting on 'hidden water bonanza,' Oregon drought markers dip](#)

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- 8/25-26 - [Workshop on Agricultural Weather Station Networks](#), San Diego, California
- 9/28-30 - [Fall 2016 \(182nd\) Council Meetings](#), St. George, Utah



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