



The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 11 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 resources.

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WestFAST News

USFS Releases Interactive Watershed Condition Framework Map

August 3, 2011

The U.S. Forest Service released an interactive map that shows the condition of each of the 12-Digit Hydrologic Cataloging Units (HUC) that contain Forest Service Land. The maps are a first step in the watershed condition framework and provides an overall ranking for each 12-Digit HUC of 1) Functioning Properly, 2) Functioning at Risk, or 3) Impaired Function. These ratings are derived by combining the ratings from 12 different rating factors. The rating factors used are: Aquatic Biota Condition, Riparian Wetland Vegetation Condition, Water Quality Condition, Water Quantity Condition, Aquatic Habitat Condition, Road and Trail Condition, Soil Condition, Fire Effects/Regime Condition, Forest Cover Condition, Forest Health Condition, Terrestrial Invasive Species Condition, and Rangeland Vegetation Condition.

The Watershed Condition Framework is meant to establish a consistent, comparable, and credible process for improving the health of watersheds on national forests and grasslands.

These maps will form the baseline for future USFS efforts and, in combination with information on ecological, social and economic factors and partnership opportunities, will be used to focus restoration efforts across the 193 million acres of National Forest System Lands.

For more information on the Watershed Condition Framework and to see the interactive map viewer, see: <http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/>.



Secretary of Energy Advisory Board Subcommittee Releases Draft Shale Gas Recommendations

August 11, 2011

An advisory committee to the Secretary of Energy released a draft set of recommendations on shale gas development. Shale gas development has been of particular interest to the water community due to the amount

of water used in the process and due to the use of hydraulic fracturing (or hydrofracking) which is the process of injecting fluids into the ground to cause fissures which allow the release of natural gas from the underground rock structures.

The recommendations in the report focus on

making information on shale gas development more publicly accessible, protecting air and water quality, defining best practices, and continuing to invest in research and development to improve safety and minimize the risks to the environment. For water quality, the report urges the adoption of a systemic approach to water management and also recommends additional field studies on methane leakage from hydrofractured wells to water reservoirs and the adoption of requirements for background water quality measurements to record existing methane levels in nearby water wells prior to drilling. See the [news release](#) for more information.



Roadmap Signed by CA and NV to Improve Lake Tahoe Clarity

August 16, 2011

The Governors of California and Nevada signed a roadmap to return Lake Tahoe to almost 100 feet of clarity within 65 years.

The water clarity of Lake Tahoe declined from a visibility level of 105 feet in 1967 to an all time low of 64 feet in 1997. Ten years of scientific study ascertained that fine particulate matter is the prime factor in diminished clarity at Lake Tahoe.

Through a decade of collaborative effort between federal, state and local agencies and public stakeholders to better understand the pollutants and sources affecting the Lake's clarity a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been developed that will provide the framework for restoring the lake to its previous clarity. For more information, see the [news release](#).

The Department of the Interior also announced \$43.1 million for restoration, conservation, and recreation projects in Nevada, including the Lake Tahoe area. These projects include \$34.1 million as DOI's final share in the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, which has invested \$300 million in improving the clarity of Lake Tahoe. For more information see the [news release](#).

WSWC Sends Letter to Congress Regarding EPA SRF Funding

August 1, 2011

The WSWC sent a letter to Congress regarding [H.R. 2584](#), which is the House appropriation bill for DOI, the environment, and related agencies. The letter expresses the concern of the western states over the \$1 Billion in cuts to EPA's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund which provides low-interest loans and grants to the states to build wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.

The letter 'recognizes the importance of decreasing the national debt', but states that the funding levels in [H.R. 2584](#) are inadequate to meet the growing infrastructure needs of the states. For a copy of the letter see your WestFAST Rep.

Agency Announcements

August 1, 2011: USFS Completes Study of Fuel Treatment Effectiveness, see [news release](#).

August 4, 2011: Agencies Sign Environmental Justice MOU, see [news release](#).

August 8, 2011: USDA and EPA Create New Partnership to Improve Drinking Water Systems and Develop Workforce in Rural Communities, see [news release](#).

August 12, 2011: USDA Announces Availability of Additional Conservation Reserve Program Acres to Support Wildlife Habitat Restoration, see [news release](#).

August 12, 2011: White House Rural Council Delivers Report on Rural America, see [news release](#).

August 12, 2011: EPA Seeks Input on Development of Drinking Water Perchlorate Regulation, see [news release](#).

August 17, 2011: USFS Chief Pushes for Rapid Clean-up After Wallow Fire in Arizona, see [news release](#).

August 22, 2011: USDA Announces Recipients of Conservation Innovation Grants in 40 States, see [news release](#).

August 29, 2011: Reclamation Selects Projects in California and Utah to Receive WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants, see [news release](#).

August 30, 2011: USGS Study Finds Arsenic, Uranium, and Other Trace Elements in Private Drinking Water Wells, see [news release](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **October 5-7, 2011:** [Fall WSWC meeting](#), Idaho Falls, Idaho
- **October 12-13, 2011:** [Remote Sensing of Evapotranspiration Applications in the Western U.S.](#), Boise, Idaho
- **March 14-16, 2012:** Spring WSWC meeting, Washington, DC
- **April 30-May 4, 2012:** [National Monitoring Conference—Water: One Shared Effort—Common Future](#), Portland, Oregon



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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