

# WestFAST News



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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## Partnerships in the Colorado River Basin Demonstrate National Promise of Interior's WaterSMART Program

December 16, 2011

At the Colorado River Water Users Association meeting in Las Vegas, NV, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science Anne Castle discussed the effectiveness of Interior's WaterSMART program in developing tools and science and promoting collaboration to address the imbalance between water supply and water demand.

The Colorado River Basin has received extra focus under the WaterSMART initiative in part due to the current water challenges that the basin now faces and the potential challenges that the basin could face in the future due to an increased demand and a limited or shrinking supply. During her presentation, Assistant Secretary Castle referenced a recently released report titled [2011 WaterSMART Program: Colorado River Basin](#). This report highlights a number of activities that Interior is coordinating in the Colorado Basin. Some of the highlights include 15 grants provided by the Bureau of Reclamation to improve water and energy efficiency and to develop climate-change analysis tools, USGS's Colorado River Basin Focus Area study being conducted as part of the Water Census, the newly established Southwestern Climate Science Center, and Reclamation's ongoing Colorado Basin Supply and Demand Study.

Additionally, Reclamation released the [2011 Secure Water Act Report](#). This report analyzed the potential impacts from climate change throughout all of the western basins, including the Colorado.

The WSWC and WestFAST have played a key role in coordinating these efforts under WaterSMART with the western states. As just one example, the Water Information and Data Subcommittee under the WSWC has already engaged the USGS in coordinating on the Colorado River Basin Focus Area Study. See the [news release](#) for more information.



## EPA Federal-State Partnership Helps Water Managers Plan for Climate Change

December 1, 2011

On December 1, The California Department of Water Resources, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Resources Legacy Fund, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a publication to assist water resource managers. The [Climate Change Handbook for Regional Water Planning](#) provides resources and tools to guide water resource managers and planners as they adapt and navigate the complexities of climate change.

The handbook uses the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) planning framework as a model into which analysis of climate change impacts and potential adaptation measures can be integrated.

IRWM is a collaborative effort to manage all aspects of water resources in a region. IRWM attempts to address the issues and differing perspectives of all the entities involved through mutually beneficial solutions. Since 2002, California voters have approved \$1.8 billion for IRWM planning and project implementation.

In addition, the handbook provides a checklist for identifying and prioritizing the vulnerability of local watersheds. The checklist includes questions about water demand and supply, wildlife and habitat, sea level rise, critical infrastructure, and hydropower.

See the [news release](#) for more information.

## Experts Strategize to Bring Desalination and Renewable Energy Together

December 14, 2011

In order to better ensure water sustainability into the future, water managers are looking at new sources of water, including water that has historically been unusable due to its brackish nature. Processes have been developed that can remove the salts from this water making it usable for a number of beneficial uses; however, the process for doing this can be very energy intensive.

In December, a group of experts met in New Mexico at a conference coordinated by the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute and the Bureau of Reclamation to discuss ways to pair the development of renewable energy with desalination efforts. Experts representing Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australia presented some of their successful projects and demonstrated why Europe and Asia are currently considered the global leaders in this technology.

Testing of a solar powered desalination project will begin in January at the Bureau of Reclamation's Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility in Alamogordo, NM. See the [news release](#) for more information.

## WestFAST and WSWC Release New Water Use Data Exchange Web Site

December 8, 2011

To provide up-to-date information on the Water Use Data Exchange Project, the WSWC and WestFAST launched a new web site that provides information on the project schedule, information on the Water Information and Data Subcommittee workgroups, products developed, and news releases. The project plan, which outlines the activities that are planned under this project has also been released on this site. The project plan had been draft up to this point as it was undergoing a review by the WSWC. The Water Use Data Exchange project continues to move forward. All of the workgroups have been formed and are actively meeting. Documents developed by these workgroups will be available on the web site soon.

This new site can be accessed at: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/wateruse/index.htm>.

## Agency Announcements

**November 30, 2011:** USGS Achieves New Heights of Accuracy for World Topography, see [news release](#).

**December 1, 2011:** New Oregon Streamflow Assessment Tool Aids Clean Water Act Compliance (EPA), see [news release](#).

**December 5, 2011:** Interior Releases First-of-its-kind Regional Study as Part of National Assessment of Carbon Storage in U.S. Ecosystem, see [news release](#).

**December 6, 2011:** NOAA Activates GOES-15 Satellite; Deactivates GOES-11 After Nearly 12 Years in Orbit, see [news release](#).

**December 8, 2011:** WaterSMART Title XVI Water Reclamation and Reuse Feasibility Studies Funding Opportunity Now Available, see [news release](#).

**December 13, 2011:** USDA Revises National Nutrient Management Standard to Achieve Maximum Agricultural, Environmental Benefits, see [news release](#).

## Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **February 8-9, 2012:** [USGS/ICWP/WSWC Cooperative Water Program Data and Science Roundtable](#), Salt Lake City, UT
- **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



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