



The **Western States Federal Agency Support Team** (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 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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## NIDIS Workshop Addresses Drought Issues

San Diego, CA—September 24-26, 2012

WestFAST members participated in a workshop on the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), sponsored by the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Presenters included representatives from public (state and federal agencies) and private organizations.

In summary, participants discussed five main actions to address drought issues through NIDIS.

First, advance NIDIS reauthorization through federal and state support. As part of this effort, participants discussed the need to hold a national meeting on drought with a variety of stakeholders to identify problems with this year's drought response and determine how a comprehensive policy could address them. Participants acknowledged that it is important assess the existing resources available to deal with the ongoing drought.

Second, develop a comprehensive national drought policy. Participants discussed the challenges of creating legislation for such a policy and possible alternatives, such as promoting drought policy as components of other related bills.

Third, strengthen NIDIS. Hold workshops on drought prediction, addressing important issues, such as socio-economic impacts. Document the current drought by compiling examples of effective drought responses. Facilitate sharing of drought-related information.

Fourth, improve the drought impacts monitor by making it more rigorous and comprehensive: include ecosystem impacts, discuss wildfire impacts, address agriculture issues (e.g. fallowed acres, farm workers, food prices), and assess tourism impacts (e.g. skiing, fishing, boating).

Fifth, prepare for NIDIS implementation. Consider timeline and costs. Other related



**Photo:** Provo River at Canyon Glen Park, Wasatch National Forest, Utah.

issues include: the national portal, drought prediction, socio-economic impacts, pilot studies, and rural communities.

Workshop sessions discussed issues that provide opportunities for federal agencies to innovate and collaborate:

- Extreme weather events and disaster risk reduction have gained public attention.
- Drought monitor does not depict urban or managed water supplies.
- States are concerned about fires, but also agriculture and wildlife impacts of drought conditions.
- States want to coordinate reservoir management between Reclamation and Corps of Engineers.
- Federal and state agencies need to coordinate effectively on regional and national drought relief programs.
- Low flows affect species, but preventing diversions affects agriculture and municipal supplies.
- Federal and state agencies need a new collaborative process to determine what a national water policy would look like.

Please see the US Drought Portal for more information about NIDIS, available at <http://www.drought.gov>.

## USGS Provides “Project Alerts” for Flooding and Drought

September 24, 2012

Sign up for “Project Alerts” to access real-time alerts for flooding and droughts across the Nation to keep up with US Geological Survey (USGS) scientists as they respond to floods, droughts, and chemical spills. These “real time” notifications are official, and yet informal, and describe flood, drought, or water quality conditions across the country, as well as how USGS field crews are responding to the event. Stay up-to-date on flows in flooded streams, drought-depleted groundwater, water quality in a lake, stream, or well, and deployment of USGS storm surge sensors in anticipation of a hurricane. A link to the RSS feed and the web archive can be found at <http://water.usgs.gov/alerts/> (see also [news release](#)).

The USGS was established on March 3, 1879. As part of its mission, the USGS serves the Nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life. USGS collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about natural resource conditions, issues, and problems.

## Agency Announcements

**9/4/2012:** Notice of Proposed Revisions to Stormwater Regulations to Clarify that an NPDES Permit is Not Required for Stormwater Discharges from Logging Roads, see [news release](#).

**9/5/2012:** Reclamation Selects Eight Entities to Receive \$333,500—Grants Will Help to Establish or Expand Local Watershed Management Groups, see [news release](#).

**9/5/2012:** NASA Voyage Set To Explore Link Between Sea Saltiness And Climate, see [news release](#).

**9/6/2012:** EPA Awards \$15 Million to Assist U.S. Small Drinking Water and Wastewater Systems, see [news release](#).

**9/7/2012:** Reclamation Seeks Public Comment on Proposed Groundwater Savings Facility Storage Agreement, see [news release](#).

**9/10/2012:** U.S. Forest Service report shows fewer trees dying in nation's forests, see [news release](#).

**9/12/2012:** New Report Shows Rise in Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife-Related Recreation Participation in 28 States - Billions of dollars generated for local economies and conservation, see [news release](#).

**9/12/2012:** America’s Great Outdoors: Salazar, Ashe Announce More than \$29 Million to Expand Refuge System, Conserve Wetlands, see [news release](#).

**9/13/2012:** EPA Awards Over \$2 Million to the State of Oklahoma to Fund Nonpoint Source Pollution Projects, see [news release](#).

**9/17/2012:** NOAA: New European satellite key for weather, climate prediction, see [news release](#).

**9/18/2012:** EPA Awards Over \$57 Million to the Texas Water Development Board to Support the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, see [news release](#).

**9/19/2012:** USDA Expands Drought Assistance to 22 States, see [news release](#).

**9/20/2012:** USDA and Colorado Announce Rio Grande Basin Water Conservation Project Agreement, see [news release](#).

**9/27/2012:** Interior Announces \$43 Million Agreement for Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, see [news release](#).

**9/27/2012:** Modeling Predicts Excessive Nitrate and Arsenic in Southwestern U.S. Aquifers, see [news release](#).

**9/27/2012:** Long-Term Conveyance Agreement Completed for Kern National Wildlife Refuge Water Supplies, see [news release](#).

## Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **October 10-12, 2012:** [Fall WSWC Meeting](#), San Antonio, TX.
- **November 14-16, 2012:** Water Management Symposium on infrastructure, Phoenix, AZ.
- **December 12-14, 2012:** Colorado River Water Users Association, [Annual Conference](#), Las Vegas, NV.



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.westgov.org/wswc/WestFAST.htm>