

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 issues.

Membership:

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

Patrick Lambert (Vice Chair), USGS
plambert@usgs.gov

Roger Gorke, EPA
Gorke.roger@epa.gov

Deborah Lawler, Reclamation
dlawler@usbr.gov

Christopher Carlson, USFS
ccarlson@fs.fed.us

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

Melinda Dalton, USGS
msdalton@usgs.gov

Paul (Doug) Curtis, BLM
pcurtis@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

Marc Kodack, DOD
marc.d.kodack.civ@mail.mil

Ed Harvey, NPS
forrest_harvey@nps.gov

Roger Pierce, WestFAST Liaison
rogervpierce@wswc.utah.gov



WestFAST News

April 2018

Earth Day 2018

(WestFAST/NOAA 04/22/18)

Earth Day 2018 was celebrated by many on April 22. Many of the WestFAST agencies use this day as a special day of outreach to celebrate many of the great earth science related projects, missions and objectives to observe, forecast, and provide basic information on earth systems. This date has been marked as Earth Day since 1970. Here is a little background information on its origin. January 28, 1969, an oil rig leaked millions of gallons of oil off the coast of Santa Barbara. On June 22, 1969, the Cuyahoga River on the southern shores of Lake Erie caught on fire as chemicals, oil, and other industrial



Cuyahoga River Fire-Ohio History Central

materials that had oozed into the river somehow ignited. Just a few months before, on That same year, reports surfaced that our national symbol, the bald eagle, was rapidly declining as a species due to the chemical DDT, while around the world, whales were being hunted nearly to extinction. These and other incidents caught the attention of the national media and galvanized public awareness of the many environmental insults being hurled at the nation and the planet.

On April 22, 1970, in response to the public outcry, Earth Day Founder Gaylord Nelson, who served as the Governor of Wisconsin (1958-1962) and in the U.S. Senate (1963-1981), organized a nationwide "teach-in" about environmental issues. More than 2,000 colleges and universities,

10,000 public schools, and 20 million citizens participated—nearly 10 percent of the United States population at that time.

This outpour of grassroots environmental activism marked the first Earth Day—a recognition of the importance of caring for the environment and accepting stewardship responsibility for the nation's resources. It also helped establish a political climate conducive to forming both the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on October 3, 1970.

We like to say that "Every day is Earth Day at NOAA." But ever since April 22, 1970, people the world over take time to recognize the importance of protecting the Earth's natural resources—be they oceanic, atmospheric, terrestrial, or biological—for future generations.

National Park Week 2018

(NPS 04/30/18)

April 21 through 29 was another successful National Park Week, where National Park Service (NPS) joins with the National Park Foundation, the official charity of America's national parks, to celebrate America's treasures. National Park Week is a time to explore amazing places, discover stories of history and culture, help out, and find your park!

The theme for National Park Week 2018 was "Park Stars," celebrating everything from starry skies to superstar volunteers, park features, and resources. Parks, programs, and partners nationwide invite people every-





where to explore stories, experiences, and sites that brighten the National Park System and public lands. Parks across the country hosted a variety of **special programs and events** which are described:

April 21: A Fee Free Day

*National Junior Ranger Day

*Volunteer Day (part of National Volunteer Week)

April 22: Earth Day—Let's get out and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System and the Wild & Scenic Rivers System!

April 28: Military & Veteran Recognition Day

April 29: National Park Rx Day

For our park partners, there are great ways to engage with National Park Week through social media and other programs! **Email us** to receive a toolkit with more information, graphics, and resources to help you plan for 2019!

NPS: Modified Fee Structure Addresses Public Feedback

(NPS 04/12/18)

As part of its ongoing efforts to address aging park infrastructure and improve the visitor experience, the National Park Service (NPS) announced today changes to the entrance fees charged at national parks. The changes, which come in response to public comments on a fee proposal released in October 2017, will modestly increase entrance fees to raise additional revenue to address the \$11.6 billion in deferred maintenance across the system of 417 parks, historic and cultural sites, and monuments.



Zion National Park —Mashable

Most seven-day vehicle passes to enter national parks will be increased by \$5 and will be implemented in many parks beginning June 1, 2018. Yosemite National Park for example will increase the price of a seven-day vehi-

cle pass to the park from \$30 to \$35. More than two-thirds of national parks will remain free to enter. **A complete list of park entrance fees may be found here.**



Olympic National Park—Great American Road Trip LLC

All of the revenue from the fee increases will remain in the NPS with at least 80 percent of the money staying in the park where it is collected. The **funds will be used for projects and activities to improve the experience** for visitors who continue to visit parks at unprecedented levels. Increased attendance at parks, means aging park facilities incurring further wear and tear. There have been 1.5 billion visits in the last five years,

“An investment in our parks is an investment in America,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. “Every dollar spent to rebuild our parks will help bolster the gateway communities that rely on park visitation for economic vitality. I want to thank the American people who made their voices heard through the public comment process on the original fee proposal. Your input has helped us develop a balanced plan that focuses on modest increases at the 117 fee-charging parks as opposed to larger increases proposed for 17 highly-visited national parks. The \$11.6 billion maintenance backlog isn't going to be solved overnight and will require a multi-tiered approach as we work to provide badly needed revenue to repair infrastructure. This is just one of the ways we are carrying out our commitment to ensure that national parks remain world class destinations that provide an excellent value for families from all income levels.”

The price of the annual America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Annual Pass and Lifetime Senior Pass will remain \$80.

“Repairing infrastructure is also about access for all Americans,” Secretary Zinke said. “Not all visitors to



our parks have the ability to hike with a 30-pound pack and camp in the wilderness miles away from utilities. In order for families with young kids, elderly grandparents, or persons with disabilities to enjoy the parks, we need to rebuild basic infrastructure like roads, trails, lodges, restrooms and visitors centers.”

Fees to enter national parks predate the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916. For example, Mount Rainier National Park began charging an entrance fee in 1908. Factoring in inflation, the \$5 entrance fee the park charged in 1914 would be the equivalent of a \$123 entrance fee today—more than four times the price of the new seven-day \$30 vehicle pass.



Saguaro National Park - image from Rough Guides

Entrance fees collected by the National Park Service totaled \$199 million in Fiscal Year 2016. The NPS estimates that once fully implemented, the new fee structure will increase annual entrance fee revenue by about \$60 million.

In addition to implementing modest fee increases and enhancing public-private partnerships aimed at rebuilding national parks, Secretary Zinke is working closely with Congress on [proposed bipartisan legislation](#) to use revenue derived from energy produced on federal lands and waters to establish a special fund within the Treasury specifically for “National Park Restoration”. The bill follows the blueprint outlined in Secretary Zinke and President Trump's budget proposal, the Public Lands Infrastructure Fund.

The NPS has a standardized entrance fee structure with linked parks and category. Some fees will be raised incrementally by January 1, 2020.

For the article with fee table, go to <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/04-12-2018-entrance-fees.htm>

Corps of Engineers Supports Administration's One Federal Decision Memorandum of Understanding

(USACE 04/10/18)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) fully supports the administration's One Federal Decision Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed Monday by numerous secretaries of federal agencies, including the Department of the Army.

President Donald J. Trump established the policy of One Federal Decision for the federal government's processing of environmental reviews and permits for major infrastructure projects in Executive Order (EO) 13807, signed by the president August 15, 2017. Monday's MOU formalizes the commitment by all the signatory agencies to implement EO 13807's framework. It ensures the federal processing of environmental reviews and permits for major infrastructure projects is coordinated, predictable and transparent.

Under One Federal Decision, EO 13807 requires each major infrastructure project to have a lead federal agency responsible for navigating the project through the process, all federal agencies to sign one “Record of Decision” (for purposes of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act), and relevant federal agencies to issue the necessary permits for the project within 90 days of the signing of the Record of Decision. Secretary of the Army Dr. Mark Esper signed the MOU



Dr. Mark Esper-Secretary of the Army

for the Army and the Corps. Esper said, “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to meeting the needs of our nation's project sponsors in the processing of its environmental reviews and permits in a timely, coordinated and concurrent way as called for in the MOU.”

Agencies signing the One Federal Decision MOU have committed to



work together to make the necessary environmental and permitting decisions for major infrastructure projects with a goal to complete the entire process within two years. In general, the MOU commits agencies to process their reviews in accordance with the following four principles:

Establish a Lead Federal Agency for the Complete Process. Under the current process, project sponsors are responsible for navigating the decision-making processes of multiple federal agencies. Under the MOU, federal agencies agree to establish one Lead Federal Agency that will navigate the federal environmental review and permitting process.

Commitment to Meeting the Lead Federal Agency's Permitting Timetable. Under the current process, agencies are not generally required to follow a comprehensive permitting timetable. Under the MOU, federal agencies agree to follow the permitting timetables established by the Lead Federal Agency with the goal of completing the process in two years.

Commitment to Conduct the Necessary Review Processes Concurrently. Under the current process, agencies may conduct their own environmental review and permitting processes sequentially resulting in unnecessary delay, redundant analysis and revisiting of decisions. Under the MOU, federal agencies agree to conduct their processes at the same time and rely on the analysis prepared by the Lead Federal Agency to the maximum extent possible.

Automatic Elevation of Interagency Disputes. Under the current process, interagency disputes sometimes linger for years in agency field offices before being elevated and resolved. Under the MOU, federal agencies agree

that interagency disputes will be automatically elevated and expeditiously resolved.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Mr. R.D. James, who attended the signing ceremony and is responsible for providing oversight for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works program, said, "One of the driving forces behind my interest in accepting this position was a desire to identify and implement opportunities and procedures that will improve the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ability to work better with other federal agencies to move dirt and get results for the nation. This MOU will help achieve that objective."

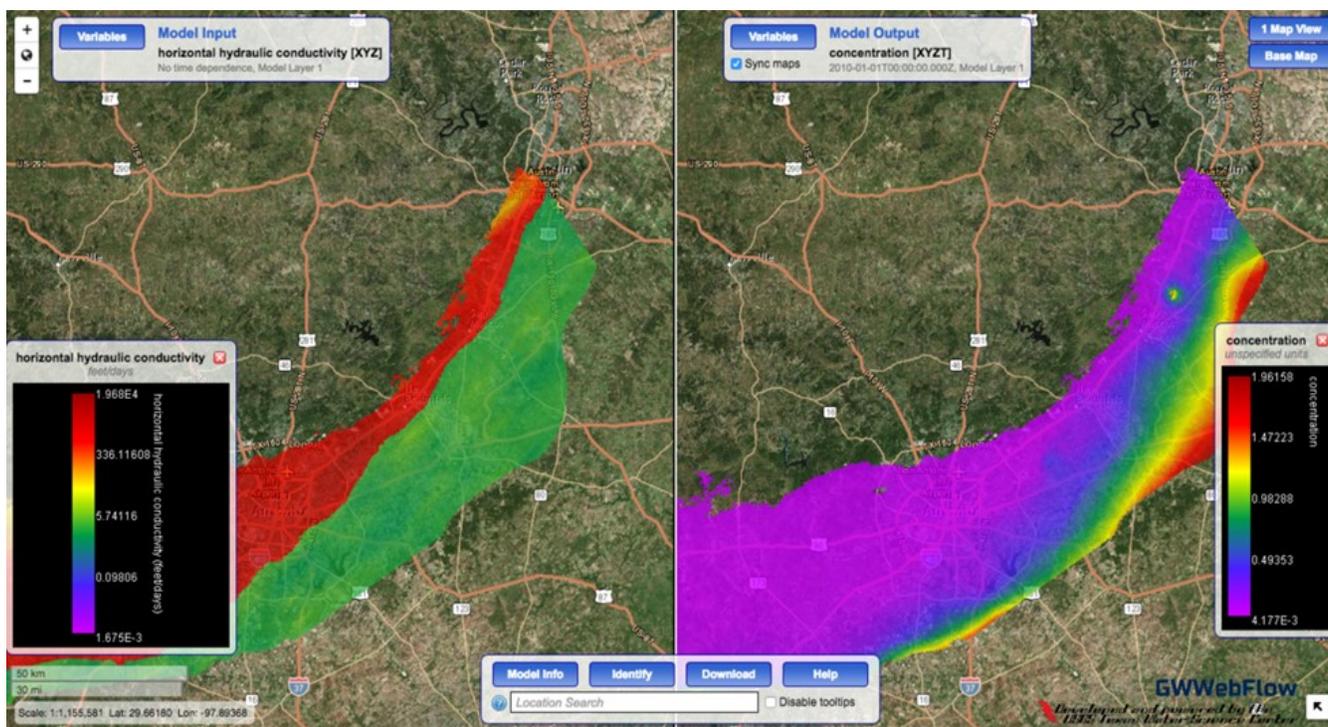
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been and continues to be part of the federal team assisting the administration in the efforts to develop and implement the infrastructure initiative. USACE is working to streamline processes and procedures in an effort to remove roadblocks which delay the implementation of projects and increase project costs unnecessarily.

New USGS Groundwater Model Visualization Tool

(USGS 04/12/18)

A new U.S. Geological Survey [groundwater model visualization](#) (image at the bottom of the page) tool is now available to help users visualize the inputs and outputs of complex groundwater models across the country.

Groundwater models are computer codes that simulate the physics of groundwater motion within an aquifer





system. This new web-based mapping tool, called [GWWebFlow](#), allows water managers and the public to visualize complex groundwater models in a more understandable way.

“This web-based platform gives water managers the ability to easily visualize groundwater model inputs and results,” said Jeremy White, USGS scientist and [GWWebFlow](#) team lead. “This was not previously possible for those without specific knowledge of and access to groundwater modeling software.”

The tool allows users to quickly and easily view computer model inputs, such as information about aquifer properties, as well as the outputs, such as groundwater levels and flow direction. Easy access to this information will help resource managers make informed decisions about resources.

“This is a new tool for water resource managers to better understand and work with complex groundwater models,” said Susan Roberts, Director Water Systems Division at Texas A&M Engineering Center for Applied Technology. “Use of netCDF and THREDDS supports common platforms for viewer selection of data and visualization of results.”

[GWWebFlow](#) supports most MODFLOW-based groundwater models; new models will be added in the future with little modification or customization. Currently, there are three USGS groundwater models available for viewing from the [USGS Texas Water Science Center](#), including a Houston-area groundwater model, a San Antonio region Edwards aquifer brackish water model, and a Pecos County region Edwards-Trinity and related aquifers model. The USGS plans to add other existing groundwater models from around the country to this web application.

Some examples of models that have been incorporated into GWWebFlow include:

Houston area: [Hydrogeology and simulation of groundwater flow and land-surface subsidence in the northern part of the Gulf Coast aquifer system, Texas, 1891-2009](#)

San Antonio region: [Updated numerical model with uncertainty assessment of 1950-56 drought conditions on brackish-water movement within the Edwards aquifer](#)

Pecos County region: [Simulation of groundwater flow in the Edwards-Trinity and related aquifers](#)

April on Ice - Except the Desert Southwest

(WestFAST/WeatherUnderground 05/01/18)

One of the coldest Aprils on record for parts of the central and eastern U.S., including some of the Plains. In addition, snowfall in the Northern and Central Rockies out onto the Plains, helped add some late season snowpack. The surge of warmth through the Plains, April 28-30 was just enough to keep some areas from setting their all-time coldest April, but quite a few still made the cut. Here's a sampling from various states:

Sioux Falls, SD: 37.5°F (old record 37.8°F in 1950; records began in 1893)

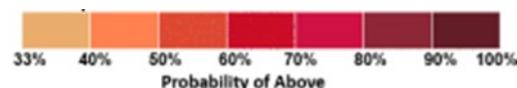
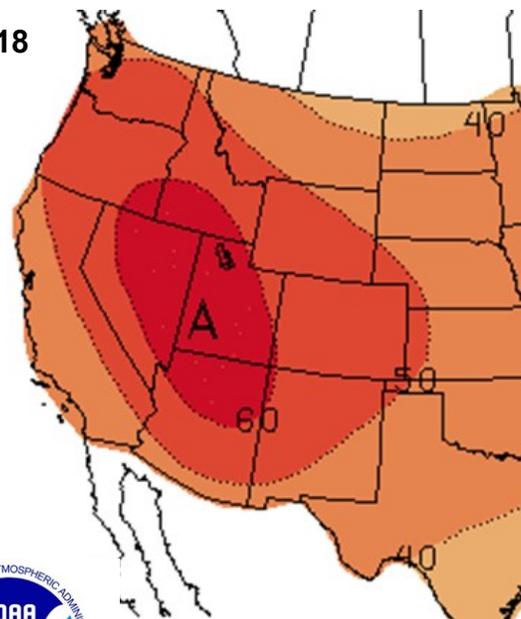
St. Joseph, MO: 45.9°F (old record 46.6°F in 1983; records began in 1908)

Mineral Wells, TX: 60.2°F (old record 60.5°F in 2007; records began in 1948)

Even as Mineral Wells, TX had its coolest April on record, another Texas city had its warmest. El Paso's average of 70.6°F beat the old record of 70.3°F from 2011; records in El Paso began in 1887. Also notching its warmest April on record was Needles, CA (79.2°F, beating 78.2°F from 1989; records began in 1888).

The Temperature Outlook for May – NOAA Climate Prediction Center

04/30/18





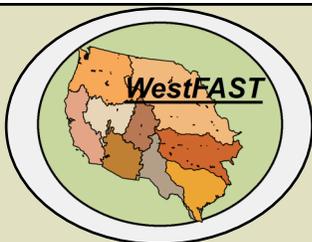
Upcoming Meetings:

The **WSWC Summer (187th) Meeting** will be held in Newport, Oregon on August 1-3, 2018. For further information, please see: <http://www.westernstateswater.org/upcoming-meetings/>.

Federal News (Control click to articles)

3/29: [MRRIC Tribal members focus on recovery strategic plan](#)
3/30: [Arctic sea ice extent at 2018 winter maximum was second smallest on record](#)
4/03: [NRCS Provides Emergency Assistance to Los Angeles Communities](#)
4/04: [EPA Announces New Funding for Water Infrastructure Projects](#)
4/04: [BOR selects eight ideas for its More Water, Less Concentrate prize competition](#)
4/04: [NRCS to Expand Targeted Conservation Effort for Wildlife on Agricultural Lands](#)
4/05: [Idaho's Snowpack Poised to Peak](#)
4/05: [Reclamation to release 2018 Annual Operating Plan for Rio Grande and Pecos River](#)
4/06: [Elusive winter leaves behind mountain snow deficit](#)
4/06: [NRCS Announces Funds for Working Lands for Wildlife program for Sage Grouse](#)
4/09: [NWRA Keynote Address - Remarks Delivered By: Brenda Burman, Commissioner](#)
4/10: [NRCS Accepting Applications for Upper Clark Fork Drought Resiliency Project](#)
4/11: [EPA Awards \\$25.4 Million to Train/Assist Small Drinking Water and Wastewater Systems](#)
4/12: [BOR and USACE release 2018 Annual Operating Plan for the Rio Grande](#)
4/12: [USGS Releases New Web-Based Groundwater Model Visualization Tool](#)
4/16: [Reopening Rivers for Migratory Fish](#)
4/16: [What is Eco-Forecasting?](#)
4/17: [EPA Announces Effort to Update Wet Weather Regulations for Wastewater Treatment](#)
4/17: [NASA Celebrates Earth Day with #NASA4Earth Tools, Events](#)
4/17: [Eyes in the Sky Spot Flames on the Ground](#)
4/17: [Explore Earth Your Way with Worldview](#)

4/17: [NASA's GPM Catches Line of Strong Storms Responsible for Tornadoes in Eastern U.S.](#)
4/18: [Sage Grouse Initiative Can Help Fund Habitat Improvements](#)
4/18: [Where Your Front Door Meets the Forest](#)
4/19: [New Technology Doubles Scientists' View of Ocean-Air Interactions](#)
4/19: [Springing Back into the Hunt for Greenhouse Gases](#)
4/19: [New Camera Tech Reveals Underwater Ecosystems from Above](#)
4/19: [NASA Engineers Dream Big with Small Spacecraft](#)
4/19: [USGS and DOE Release Public Dataset and Viewer of Wind Turbine Locations and Characteristics](#)
4/20: [GPS Sensor Web Helps Forecasters Warn of Monsoon Flash Floods](#)
4/20: [EPA Announces First Water Infrastructure Loan Under WIFIA](#)
4/21: [Satellite Imagery Sheds Light on Agricultural Water Use](#)
4/25: [Zinke Announces Grants Boosts Wetland, Waterfowl Conservation, Access to Public Lands](#)
4/25: [Many Low-Lying Atoll Islands Will Be Uninhabitable by Mid-21st Century](#)
4/25: [Lower Colorado Regional Director Terry Fulp receives Interior's Meritorious Service Award](#)
4/26: [Before the Flood Arrives](#)
4/26: [USDA, Private Sector to Help Producers in Four States Protect and Restore Soils](#)
4/26: [Watershed Projects Bring Nebraska Estimated Benefits of \\$80 Million a Year](#)
4/30: [Prepare for the Summer Smog Season with Free Air Quality Alerts](#)
4/30: [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Identifies Short-Term Natural Disaster Recovery Activities](#)



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Roger V. Pierce, WestFAST Federal Liaison
Email: rogervpierce@wswc.utah.gov
Phone: 801-685-2555

Check out the WestFAST Web Site: <http://www.westernstateswater.org/westfast>