

## **Western States Federal Agency Support Team Operating Framework**

August 15, 2018

**A. Official Designation:** Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST)

**B. Purpose and Duties of the WestFAST:** WestFAST is intended to bring the Federal agencies with water resources responsibilities in the western states together into a collaboration that provides support and information to the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and the Western Governors Association (WGA). WestFAST provides a mechanism for collaboration among the federal agencies as they work with the WSWC to implement recommendations in the Western Governors' Associations (WGA) report *Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future* and on other appropriate issues. Agency representatives assigned to WestFAST will serve as points-of-contact for their respective agencies and collaborate among themselves to help their agencies effectively and efficiently carry out their water-related missions. The WestFAST Federal Liaison functions as an information and coordination conduit among the Federal agencies and between the Federal agencies and the Western States Water Council and provides information to Council members, as needed.

**C. Membership:** The current members of the WestFAST include representatives from: U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. WestFAST agency representatives will be designated by their agency Principal and will serve until new representatives or acting representatives are designated.

Additional agencies with water resources responsibilities in the western states may join WestFAST via a request by WSWC or a nomination by an existing WestFAST agency.

The WestFAST Liaison will be selected by member agencies for a two-year detail (Federal fiscal years – October 1 to September 30), in collaboration and consultation with WSWC. It is expected that all WestFAST agencies will contribute their prorated share of funding for the WestFAST Liaison. The WestFAST Liaison will remain an employee of his/her "home agency" and will return to his/her home agency the completion of the detail. It is anticipated that long-term per diem will be provided to the Liaison if the Salt Lake City, UT area, is not his/her duty station, and that the cost of that per diem will be included in the pro-rated cost.

**D. Leadership of WestFAST:** A Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected biennially by WestFAST representatives. Following the pattern of WSWC, the terms will run from July 1-June 30. Both the Chair and the Vice Chair will serve two-year terms.

**E. Roles:**

**WestFAST Liaison:** The WestFAST Liaison represents WestFAST agencies in day-to-day work with the WSWC and staff. The Liaison serves as the intergovernmental program

coordinator for the WestFAST to assist the WSWC in intergovernmental relations, declarations of cooperation, cooperative agreements, and contracts. Ensures these Operating Framework guidelines are reviewed annually and updated as required through the WestFAST representatives. The Liaison provides consultation, makes recommendations and facilitates efforts of the WSWC and WestFAST, including in the coordination of WSWC meetings relevant to WestFAST agencies. The WestFAST Liaison drafts and distributes documents, as needed, to WestFAST agency representatives or to WSWC. The Liaison provides direct assistance to the WestFAST Chair and serves as his/her representative as needed.

**WestFAST Chair:** The WestFAST Chair is elected first to serve a 24-month term as Vice Chair that runs from July 1-June 30 and automatically becomes Chair.

The WestFAST Chair will perform the following duties:

1. Leads or assigns responsibility for leading all WestFAST meetings;
2. Manages the work of WestFAST;
3. Inspires a shared vision among all WestFAST representatives;
4. Builds future leadership within the organization;
5. Represents WestFAST representatives as their spokesperson to Western Governors' Association, the Western States Water Council and other organizations; and
6. Serves as an official liaison among all participating Federal agencies by working through their respective agency representative.

**WestFAST Vice Chair:** The WestFAST Vice-Chair is elected by a majority vote of WestFAST representatives to a 24-month term that runs concurrently with the WestFAST Chair. Upon completion of the 24-month term, the Vice-Chair automatically becomes the WestFAST Chair.

The WestFAST Vice Chair will perform the following duties:

1. In the absence of the Chair, lead all WestFAST meetings.
2. In the absence of the Chair, represent WestFAST before the Western States Water Council and other organizations.
3. Assume full responsibility as WestFAST Chair, should the Chair become incapacitated or unavailable.

**Immediate Past WestFAST Chair:**

1. Serves as senior advisor to WestFAST on matters relating to strategic planning, communications and outreach, and techniques of collaboration.

**WestFAST members:** The federal employees who are designated by their respective agencies to serve as liaisons to the WSWC comprise WestFAST.

**F. Support Services:** Day-to-day office support for the WestFAST Liaison is provided by WSWC staff. Each WestFAST agency provides support to WestFAST representatives, as needed.

**G. Funding:** Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, WestFAST approves a budget for the Liaison Officer. Each WestFAST agency is responsible for funding a share developed in a

manner consistent with appropriations law and with a consistent reference to the statement of work that is expected of the liaison for the representation of each individual agency. By doing this specific language for each agency, we avoid any conflict with the “Agency Funding Ban”. The home agency sets up a reimbursable cost authority number for each funding agreement; funds are expected to be transferred within 60 days following each agency’s fiscal year appropriation. Actual costs are distributed among the reimbursable cost authority numbers based on the agency’s calculated share.

**H. Meetings and Procedures:** WestFAST representatives will assist in developing WestFAST meeting agendas and discussion topics. Focus of meetings will be on the progress of action plans and activities completed with respect to each of the work plan objectives. In addition, opportunities for interagency cooperation and coordination will be highlighted and discussed.

**H. Duration:** It is anticipated that the WestFAST will continue if there is an identified need for collaboration between the WestFAST agencies and the WSWC.

## **Appendix A. Origins of Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST)**

The western states play a unique and pivotal role in water management and many significant water issues facing our nation disproportionately affect these western states. At the same time, issues that face the West, such as drought, are now reflected in other parts of the nation. As the West deals with population growth challenges, potential impacts of climate change, significant water information gaps, ongoing drought conditions, the challenges associated with providing water for in-stream values, conjunctive use of surface and ground water issues, significant infrastructure needs, and planning within the context of the new paradigm of locally led watershed initiatives, collaboration will not only be vital but, paramount to, achieving successful solutions.

In this regard, the Western States Water Council (WSWC) saw a need to formalize a collaborative partnership by working with federal agencies to establish a formal “Western States Federal Agency Support Team,” composed of key representatives from federal agencies that are interested in - and involved in - western water issues.

In July 2008, nine federal agencies - signed a Declaration of Cooperation to work together and with the WSWC to improve the effectiveness of collaboration in seeking watershed solutions to water issues in the Western States. This effort is to emphasize “proactive, voluntary, participatory and incentive-based approaches to water resource management and conservation assistance programs....”

The initial effort of WestFAST will be to jointly provide support and assistance to WSWC for implementing recommendations and actions identified in the June 2008 Western Governors’ Association report, “Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps. “Appendix B. Western States Water Council

The Western States Water Council is the primary water resource advisory body of the Western Governors’ Association. The Council members are appointed by the Governor of their state and focus on the water issues of the West.

## **Appendix C. Western States Federal Agency Support Team**

### **Department of Defense**

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Natural Resources Program (NR Program) supports the military's testing and training mission by protecting its biological resources. The NR Program provides policy, guidance, and oversight for management of natural resources on approximately 25 million acres of military land, air, and water resources owned or operated by DoD. The NR Program’s goal is to support the military's combat readiness mission by ensuring continued access to realistic habitat conditions, while simultaneously working to ensure the long-term sustainability of natural heritage. In addition to its land management responsibilities, DoD collectively includes over 500 installations with 562,000 buildings and structures. The Department’s inventory is diverse, encompassing barracks, commissaries, data centers, office

buildings, laboratories, and aircraft maintenance depots. DoD's western U.S installations are a sub-set of the 500 installations around the world. Through its facility water and energy efficiency programs DoD has lowered its water and energy use over the last 10 years.

### **U. S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will perform a comprehensive review of on-going planning studies with the intention of cross-walking the potential study outputs with the initiatives described in the "Next Steps" Report. For example, the three western Corps Divisions (Northwestern, South Pacific and Southwestern) could demonstrate potential cohesion between the existing and planned work in support of state water plan development in TX, OK, and KS. Other possible studies/initiatives, for example, the "Partnerships for Collaborative Integrated Water Resource Planning and Management" which has the purpose of identifying gaps, challenges, and needs for federal assistance to state and regional water resource planning and management, may reflect additional opportunities to work collaboratively with states on their plans and/or studies involved with storage reallocation.

### **Bureau of Reclamation**

The Bureau of Reclamation is the nation's largest wholesale water supplier, operating 348 reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 245 million acre-feet of water. Reclamation water supplies serve more than 31 million people and provide 140,000 western farmers with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland. Reclamation is the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the western United States. The agency's mission is to assist in meeting the increasing water demands of the West while protecting the environment and the public's investment in facilities. Reclamation is committed to working in partnership with states, Tribes, water and power customers, and others to seek creative and collaborative solutions to Western water issues. Reclamation has numerous programs, initiatives and activities that will help the western states, Native American tribes and others meet new water needs and balance the multitude of competing uses of water in the west.

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is one of the primary governmental organizations responsible for protecting human health and natural ecosystems. As such, EPA plays a major role in the regulation, protection, and improvement of water resources and supplies of the United States. EPA's Office of Water works with on the 10 EPA Regions, other federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian tribes, the regulated community, organized professional and interest groups, land owners and managers, and the public-at-large to accomplish EPA's mission.

### **National Oceanic Atmospheric Agency**

The overall goal of NOAA's Western Region Regional Collaboration Team (NOAA West) is to engage regional partners, stakeholders and customers on NOAA's behalf to foster dialogue regarding products and services required to meet NOAA's mission goals. It is also a goal of the team to facilitate collaboration among NOAA entities and partners in the region to address national and regional priorities. A secondary activity is to keep informed on key associations, councils, workgroups, and meetings and look for opportunities where NOAA could collectively leverage its resources through the Line Offices (LO) to address problems. This activity may include projects across multiple LOs.

### **USDA Forest Service**

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages 193 million acres of public lands in national forests and grasslands, supports states and tribes in the management of non-federal forest lands, and provides research, data, and technology development to support the understanding and management of forests and rangelands. The National Forests and Grasslands are the source of about half of the freshwater supply in the West (about one-fifth nationwide). As such, the Agency has important water stewardship responsibilities to help maintain the integrity, sustainability, and quality of the Nation's freshwater. The USFS is committed to working with WSWC, the governors, the Tribes, and other interested entities to improve watershed condition on National Forest System lands and non-federal forest lands to help meet the needs of the states, tribes, and the public for water.

### **Bureau of Land Management**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is committed to working with the Western States Water Council and the WestFAST agencies to maintain and enhance the 260 million acres of public land watersheds under their administration. The agency developed the Healthy Lands Initiative (HLI) to support watershed restoration efforts and to identify areas where partnerships can leverage funding for needed work. The BLM is creating a framework for a National Monitoring Strategy that involves assessment, inventory, and monitoring systems. Discussion on how to store and retrieve our collected water-quality data has been ongoing. The BLM is also involved in long-range, water-supply planning as it relates to providing information on drought impact assessment in areas where we have ecosystem and recreational management needs. The BLM can provide technical assistance where there is mixed ownership to achieve high-value ecological services in watersheds. The BLM is active in resource management issues where there is a sharing of river basin areas and groundwater resources.

### **U.S. Geological Survey**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is the federal government's lead agency for providing hydrologic data and information to the nation. The USGS operates a national network of surface-water, ground-water, and water-quality monitoring sites. The USGS also carries out basic research on hydrologic processes, develops new hydrologic measurement techniques and technologies, and conducts a wide range of local, regional, and national hydrologic assessments and investigations. All this information is collected to nationally consistent standards and made freely available through the USGS National Water Information System (NWIS) and through USGS publications and journal articles. In the Western United States, the USGS operates a network of 3,600 stream gages, 13,000 ground-water observation wells, and 2,800 ground-water quality monitoring sites. In addition, the USGS currently is conducting over 250 hydrologic investigations, often in cooperation with state, local and tribal water resources agencies, which address specific western water resources management issues or information needs. These investigations typically address questions of water availability, water-use, water-quality, environmental restoration, flooding, drought, and climate change, among other important topics. Hydrologic information provided by the USGS is used by a wide range of federal, state, local, and tribal water management agencies, consulting firms, the academic community, and the public for hydrologic design and decision making and serves as one of the foundations for the wise use and management of the Nation's water resources. More information on specific USGS

water programs can be found at, <https://www2.usgs.gov/water/>.

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to achieve conservation objectives on private lands that result in public benefits. Conservation objectives for water resources include, improving water quality by reducing sediment and agricultural pollutants; improving riparian areas and wetlands; and improving water use efficiency on irrigated lands. NRCS provides assistance to local communities to address flooding, water storage, and related issues, and provides technical assistance for locally-led watershed planning in coordination with Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils, state agencies, tribes and other partners. NRCS also provides resource information, such as the Natural Resources Inventory and Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts, to decision-makers and water managers in the west.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. FWS works to protect and recover threatened and endangered species, restore nationally significant fisheries, and to conserve and restore wildlife habitat, such as wetlands. FWS distributes hundreds of millions of dollars annually to states, territories, and tribes for fish and wildlife conservation projects. FWS also manages the 96-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System and operates 70 National Fish Hatcheries which mitigate for fisheries lost as a result of federal water projects and support recreational fisheries.

### **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

The NASA Applied Sciences Program works within NASA earth sciences to leverage investment of space-based observation, model results, and development and deployment of enabling technologies, systems, and capabilities. Such observations provide a huge volume of valuable data in both near-real-time and extended back nearly 50 years about the Earth's land surface conditions, such as land cover type, vegetation type and health, precipitation, snow, soil moisture, water levels, and solar radiation. The primary goal of the Earth Science Applied Science Program is to infuse NASA products in to current and future operational decision support systems operated by end users. NASA Applied Sciences Program works closely with other U.S. government agencies, universities, and non-profit and private sector organizations both domestically and internationally. The NASA Water Resources Program is one of eight program elements and it addresses concerns and decision making related to water availability and water quality.

### **Bureau of Indian Affairs**

## **Appendix D. Declaration of Cooperation**