

WestFAST 2012-13

Accomplishments

(July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013)

JULY 2013

WESTFAST AGENCIES & REPRESENTATIVES

U.S. FOREST SERVICE
JEAN THOMAS
(CHAIR)

U.S. FISH &
WILDLIFE SERVICE
ANDREW HAUZINGER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE
CLARE MENDELSON

U.S. BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION
BECKY FULKERSON
(VICE CHAIR)

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION
SERVICE
MICHAEL STROBEL

U.S. BUREAU OF
LAND MANAGEMENT
LEE KOSS

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF
ENGINEERS
JOHN D'ANTONIO

NATIONAL OCEANIC &
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION
ROGER PULWARTY

FEDERAL LIAISON
ERIC STEVENS

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY
ROGER GORKE,

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
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1.0 Introduction

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) promotes collaboration between the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and 12 federal agencies with water resource 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. WestFAST was formed in 2008 in response to Western Governors' Association report titled: [*Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps Report*](#) (*Next Steps Report*). Specifically, WestFAST was formed to promote collaboration between federal agencies, and between states and federal agencies. WestFAST was also intended to help the WSWC implement collaborative efforts outlined in its *Next Steps Report*. Some of the areas that the report identifies for federal-state collaboration include: 1) water policy, 2) water to meet future demands, 3) water infrastructure, 4) Indian water rights, 5) extreme weather events, and 6) endangered species. From this list, WestFAST focused on a number of emerging federal initiatives and promoted communication between federal agencies.

2012-2013 Highlights:

- **Transitioned the WaDE project to WSWC.**
- **WestFAST gave a combined 43 presentations at 6 WSWC meetings.**
- **Conducted monthly conference calls between 12 federal agencies.**
- **Sent monthly WestFAST Newsletter to 128 federal and state recipients.**
- **Hosted four federal Collaboration Series lectures via webinar to discuss federal initiatives.**
- **Conducted a WestFAST strategic survey to assess organizational needs and direction.**

2.0 Supporting the Goals of the WSWC and Assisting in the Implementation of the *Next Steps Report*

In 2012-2013, WestFAST supported the WSWC in several key areas. This included transitioning the WaDE project to WSWC, giving 43 presentations at the 6 WSWC meetings, conducting monthly conference calls between 12 federal agencies, sending the monthly WestFAST Newsletter to 128 federal and state recipients, hosting four federal Collaboration Series lectures via webinar to discuss federal initiatives, and conducting a WestFAST strategic survey to assess organizational needs and direction. Additionally, WestFAST developed materials, held conferences, and initiated projects in direct support of the *Next Steps Report*. Some highlights from these activities are described below.

Activities in Support of the *Next Steps Report*

From July 2012 to June 2013, WestFAST made progress on three focus areas from the *Next Steps Report*: Water to Meet Future Demands, Water Infrastructure Needs and Strategies, and Climate Change Impacts. The following are some highlights of WestFAST's work related to specific objectives in the report. The language from the objectives in *Next Steps Report* is included to provide background for the activities performed in support of those objectives.

Objective 7: State and federal water resource agencies should work together to provide universal access to water-related data collected by all state, local, and federal agencies, as well as tools and models that better enable the synthesis, visualization, and evaluation of water related data, including that to be shared with local governments. (*Next Steps 2008, page III*)

Activities: Under the category of “**Water to Meet Future Demands,**” WestFAST facilitated the exchange of federal and state water data as part of the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) (Next Steps, Objective 7) by:

- presenting the project plan to WSWC at its fall meeting
- conducting workshops with 14 of the 18 WSWC member states
- developing a survey to assess state capabilities to support the data exchange
- designing the schema and database
- facilitating four workgroups that met monthly
- coordinating with the USGS Water Census and Sandia Labs
- assisting the WSWC in developing a WaDE demonstration
- transitioning the project to a new WSWC employee for completion

Objective 22: States, with assistance from relevant federal agencies, should provide institutional mechanisms and otherwise encourage regional water and wastewater projects to maximize economies of scale and minimize environmental impacts from smaller, piecemeal project development. (*Next Steps 2008, page V-VI*)

Activities: Second, “Water Infrastructure Needs and Strategies” - WestFAST supported WSWC in hosting an Infrastructure Symposium in November 2012. Specifically, WestFAST recruited speakers for this symposium in Phoenix, Arizona (Next Steps, Objective 22). This symposium encouraged discussions on how the federal agencies can better support the states in augmenting water supply and managing infrastructure to meet future needs.

Objectives 25: Federal agencies should work cooperatively with state and local water agencies to identify necessary studies, data and projects and states should actively support funding to assist in implementation. (*Next Steps 2008, page VI*)

Activities: WestFAST worked to finalize plans for a Colorado River Basin Webinar in June 2013 (Next Steps, Objective 25). However, because of budget concerns and travel restrictions, WestFAST postponed the plans to hold a webinar to discuss federal collaboration within the Colorado River Basin, identifying what is working well and what needs to be improved. Planning for this event will likely continue through the next WestFAST work plan.

Objectives 32: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should take the lead in improving forecasts on multiple geographic and temporal scales and conduct additional research in collaboration with water management agencies so that forecasts can be incorporated into reservoir operations. (*Next Steps 2008, page VI*)

Activities: Third, “Climate Change Impacts” - WestFAST supported WSWC participation in NIDIS workshops and conferences to address issues related to climate

variability. Specifically, WestFAST recruited speakers for NIDIS workshop (Next Steps, Objective 32).

Forward: Developing optimal solutions to the challenges laid out in the 2006 WGA water report will require an integrated approach and greater partnerships among state, local, and federal agencies. This approach should consider all needs together, develop effective solutions which are complementary rather than conflicting, and provide direction for selecting the most appropriate governmental entities or organizations for implementing solutions (*Next Steps 2008*, page I).

Activities: *Next Steps 2008* describes the need to continue effective collaboration between state and federal agencies. In response, as part of the 2012-2013 Work Plan, WestFAST developed a draft Principles of Collaboration report and is in the process of making substantial revisions. As a part of the revisions, WestFAST is meeting with WSWC members to get input on what is working well and what needs improvement in the collaboration between state and federal agencies. WestFAST intends to share the report among its member agencies to improve federal-state collaboration.

Providing Information on Federal Programs

WestFAST members provided a total of 43 presentations at four WSWC meetings in 2012-2013. These presentations were very beneficial to both the WSWC and the federal agencies, in that they provided a forum for discussion on a number of these issues. Some of the highlights from these presentations include the following.

Extreme Weather Events: Science, Planning and Preparedness; July 30 – August 1, 2012; San Diego, CA

1. NOAA: “Extremes in a Changing Climate—NOAA’s Role,” Roger Pulwarty
2. NOAA: “Extreme Weather Events: Science, Planning and Preparedness,” Tim Schneider
3. USBR: “CCAWWG Report on Short-Term Needs for Weather, Climate, and Hydrology Information Needs,” Levi Brekke
4. USACE: “Follow-up on 2010 Federal Non-Stationarity Workshop,” David Raff
5. USACE: “Atmospheric River Floods in Washington,” Larry Schick
6. NASA: “Extreme Weather Events and Applications of Remote Sensing,” Forrest Melton
7. NOAA: “21st Century Western Observing System for Extreme Precipitation: Research Developments and Implementation Alternatives,” Marty Ralph
8. NOAA: “Extreme Weather Events Science, Planning and Preparedness,” Roger Pierce
9. NOAA: “Early warning,” Roger Pulwarty
10. USDA Risk Management Agency: “Risk Management Programs for Agriculture,” Jeff Yasui
11. DoE: “Department of Energy and Extreme Weather,” Gerald Sehlke
12. NOAA/NWS: “American Meteorological Society Water Resources Activities,” Tim Schneider

NIDIS Reauthorization Workshop; September 24-26, 2012; San Diego, CA

13. USDA: “USDA Drought Programs,” Brandon Willis
14. USDA Risk Management Agency: “Facing Drought Challenges,” Rebecca Davis

15. USDA Risk Management Agency: “Federal Role in Drought, USDA Drought Programs,” Jeff Yasui
16. NOAA: “NIDIS Program Overview,” Roger Pulwarty
17. NOAA: “NIDIS Budget and Expenditures,” Chad McNutt
18. USGS: NIDIS Upper Colorado River Basin Pilot Project,” Jim Verdin
19. USGS: Desertification & Landscape Changes Navajo Nation-Four Corners Area,” Margaret Hiza Redsteer
20. USGS: “NIDIS Remote Sensing,” Jim Verdin
21. USBR: “USBR Basin Studies,” Seshu Vaddey
22. NRCS: “Soil Moisture Monitoring Needs,” Mike Strobel

Water Resources Infrastructure Needs and Strategies; November 14-16, 2012; Phoenix, Arizona

23. USBR: “Strategies to meet Western Water Resource Infrastructure Needs,” David Palumbo
24. USACE: “Infrastructure Needs and Streamlining Regulatory Requirements,” James Hannon
25. EPA: “Importance of Water to our National Economy,” Ellen Gilinsky
26. NRCS: “Infrastructure Needs and Streamlining Regulatory Requirements,” Astor Boozer
27. EPA: “Infrastructure Needs and Streamlining Regulatory Requirements,” Ellen Gilinsky

WSWC-WGA Energy-Water Workshop; April 2, 2013; Denver, Colorado

28. USGS: “Federal Perspectives on the Nexus: A Water/Energy Partnership,” Eric Evenson

Spring (171st) Council Meeting; April 3-5, 2013; Denver, Colorado

29. NOAA: “NIDIS Drought Update and Partnership Initiatives,” Roger Pulwarty
30. USACE: “Corps of Engineers Federal Support Toolbox Website Demo,” Ada Benavides
31. EPA: “Stormwater Rulemaking,” Connie Bosma
32. EPA: “Waters of the US,” David Evans
33. EPA: “Importance of Water Study/Urban Waters Initiatives,” Roger Gorke
34. USDA: “USDA and Western Water Resources,” Harris Sherman

Improving Drought Prediction at Seasonal to Inter-Annual Timescales; April 29 – May 1, 2013; San Diego, California

35. NOAA: “National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS),” Robin Webb
36. NOAA: “NOAA’s Drought Task Force,” Annarita Mariotti
37. USBR: “Improving how we Anticipate and Prepare for Drought in Reservoir Operations,” Levi Brekke
38. NOAA: “Preludes to Drought,” Martin Hoerling
39. NASA: “The Regional Hydrological Extremes Assessment System,” Joshua Fisher
40. USFS: “Seasonal Wildfire Prediction,” Tom Rolinski
41. NOAA: “HMT’s Progress on Atmospheric River Storms,” Marty Ralph
42. USGS: “Atmospheric Rivers as Drought Busters: Past, Present and Future,” Mike Dettinger
43. NRCS: “Soil Moisture Measurement Needs,” Mike Strobel

3.0 Promoting Federal-State Collaboration

One of the goals of WestFAST is to promote federal-state collaboration. WestFAST is in a unique position to foster interagency discussion among various topics related to water management. Through WestFAST, the team has shared information on pressing issues that were relevant to all of the federal agencies and reached out to numerous stakeholders on the purpose and value of WestFAST.

Information Sharing

All of the WestFAST agencies have a number of high-priority initiatives that can benefit from coordination with the other federal agencies. WestFAST provides a forum for these agencies to discuss these initiatives, and to allow for the agencies to better understand how they can better work together. As part of this process, WestFAST and WSWC representatives participated in a conference call in February 2013 with USACE to discuss the implementation of the USACE Federal Support Toolbox.

Also, WestFAST conducted a strategic survey in April and May 2013 to assess organizational needs and direction. Respondents included representatives from the following federal agencies: Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Geologic Survey, Department of Energy, Forest Service, and Reclamation. The results of the survey indicated that following are important to the federal agencies: (1) communication with the states to exchange information and data; (2) collaboration with the states to work together on joint projects shared by WestFAST and WSWC; and (3) communication and collaboration between the federal agencies to coordinate federal initiatives.

Outreach

The WestFAST newsletter currently reaches 128 recipients throughout federal and state agencies. The Operating Guidelines and Declaration of Cooperation were updated to clarify the scope of work and include the additional agencies that joined since the formation of WestFAST in 2008 when it only consisted of nine agencies. WestFAST conducted monthly conference calls between 12 federal agencies and hosted four federal Collaboration Series lectures via webinar to discuss federal initiatives