

News from WestFAST

WestFAST members recently held an historic meeting between the Western States Water Council (WSWC) and the leadership of WestFAST member agencies. So, what makes this meeting or any meeting "historic?" Well, this is the first time in many, many years - even possibly decades - that the senior political leadership from the federal agencies charged with managing and protecting our water resources from a federal perspective have met in one place with our partners in managing water resources in the western states.

At this meeting, WSWC delivered a letter acknowledging this unique, collaborative federal-state partnership. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary - Water and Science Anne Castle hosted the meeting and thanked WSWC members for their creativity in problem-solving and collaboration. One specific action from the meeting discussions focused on WestFAST agencies assisting the WSWC with its Infrastructure and Financing Symposium later this year.

Roger Gorke
WestFAST Chair

The letter from the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and WSWC notes ...

"improved collaboration and coordination between the federal agencies and the states, as well as among the various federal agencies, has been a key goal of Western Governors, and we believe that the establishment of the Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST)[has] been [a] crucial step ... in achieving that goal.

Since its creation nearly 18 months ago, WestFAST has developed a close working partnership with the WGA and WSWC. WestFAST and its Federal Liaison Officerhave met and exceeded our expectations. ... We also believe it has provided reciprocal benefits for federal agencies.

The engagement and responsiveness of the WestFAST agency representatives and federal liaison have resulted in a new and better way to coordinate water management in the West."

Letter to WestFAST agencies

March 25, 2010

Pam O. Inmann, WGA Executive Director
Tony Willardson WSWC Executive Director



Report from the 162nd Western

States Water WSWC Meeting

On March 23, the WSWC held its 162nd meeting in Washington, D.C. Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Regional Director Bill McDonald, a former WSWC member and Chair, provided an overview of Reclamation's FY 2011 budget request and related programs on behalf of Commissioner Mike Connor. During the WSWC meeting, members determined to continue Position #285, in support of federal funding for studies on the water resources-related impacts of climate change and adaptation efforts, as well as Position #288, in support of implementation of the Rural Water Supply Act of 2006. The WSWC further recommended that the Western Governors' Association (WGA) continue its positions regarding the clean-up of abandoned mines, Indian water rights settlements, and federal non-tribal fees in general water right adjudications. At the same time, the WSWC allowed Positions to sunset on a proposed "Twenty-First Century Water Commission;" the "Bureau of Reclamation Water Conservation, Efficiency and Management Act;" Reclamation's unfunded Technical Assistance to States Program; and the proposed (and since enacted) Agricultural Water Enhancement Program.

ICWP-WSWC Policy Roundtable

On March 24, the WSWC and Interstate Council on Water Policy co-sponsored a roundtable discussion that focused on the role of the federal government in support of state water planning for a sustainable future.

The first presenter - Matt Larsen, U.S. Geological Survey, described the work of CEQ's Climate Change Task Force, which is developing recommendations for climate change adaptation. Additional federal presenters included: Nancy Stoner (EPA), Anne Castle (DOI), Terrance (Rock) Salt (Army), Harris Sherman (USDA), and Gary Carter (NOAA). The Roundtable concluded with a presentation by staff from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power; House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment; and House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power.

WSWC-WestFAST Principals Meeting

Separately, on March 25, WSWC members met with lead officials from WestFAST agencies and stressed the importance of collaboration, highlighting WestFAST's accomplishments. The WSWC thanked the agencies for their participation and urged them to continue their support for a Federal Liaison position assigned to the Western States Water Council.

Drought/Climate Services Workshop

WSWC, in partnership with the WGA, held the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and Climate Services Workshop for the Western United States, on March 31-April 1, 2010, in Burlingame, CA. The workshop drew together approximately 45 decision-makers from local, federal, and state agencies; the navigation industry, conservation groups, and academia. Participants offered a range of suggestions for coordination in integrating, displaying, and distributing climate, weather, and water data and information. WGA plans to hold a national meeting focused on Drought/Climate Services in Washington, DC, in mid-September. Following that meeting, WGA will provide a report to the NIDIS executive council and federal agencies on end user needs and recommendations for future activities.

Save the Date

Western Water Resources Infrastructure Strategies Symposium is scheduled for Nov. 8-10, 2010, in San Antonio, TX. Details and agenda to be announced soon.

WestFAST

Nine federal agencies comprise the Western Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST). The Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have signed a Declaration of Cooperation to assist the WSWC.

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