

**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.



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# WestFAST News

November 2012

## Western Water Resources Infrastructure Symposium

Phoenix, AZ—November 14-16, 2012

The Western Governors' Association and Western States Water Council, in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, hosted a symposium on strategies to meet western water resource infrastructure needs (see [presentations](#)).

A panel on "Infrastructure Financing and Conservation" explained the following:

- States often face social and political challenges to using reclaimed water for municipal demands.
- There is not a specific solution that will work for each state to solve its water resource challenges.
- Agriculture is often seen as a major water user, but it provides important services, such as food production and a drought buffer for municipal demands.
- Possible water infrastructure funding sources include: bottled water tax, transaction tax, impact fees for new developments, and well fees for both existing and new wells.
- The status of our water infrastructure is poor: the American Society of Civil Engineers evaluated the drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in the United States, giving it a D- grade (see [report](#)).
- The water infrastructure funding gap is growing. EPA estimates this total gap could reach approximately \$500 billion dollars by 2020 (see [report](#)).

A prominent Arizona attorney made the following observations:

- There is often a disconnect between water management professionals and the public.
- Landuse issues get high publicity but water issues do not.
- In landuse disputes, water is often the biggest issue.

Two panels on "Infrastructure Projects, Programs & Funding" discussed the following:

- Some states are moving away from dependence on federal State Revolving Fund (SRF) money, which carries heavy federal limitations.
- There is a trend toward forming regional water districts in rural areas.



**Photo:** [Jordanelle Dam and Reservoir](#) (62% full) are located on the Provo River about 6 miles north of Heber City, Utah.

- Shortage of funds puts planning in a negative light, but planning often saves infrastructure costs.
- There is a move toward loans rather than grants in many states.
- States need to be proactive by giving a proposed solution rather than waiting for Congress to pass a new federal law.

A panel of engineers on "Construction Innovations: Better, Faster & Smarter" discussed the future of public-private partnerships, which do not commonly occur in the United States because public money has been easier to acquire than private money. This could change in the near future as budgets become tighter.

A federal panel discussed "Integrated Water Resources Management: Infrastructure Needs and Streamlining Regulatory Requirements," explaining that there is a need for the public to understand the importance of infrastructure and its important role in society (e.g. economy).

Finally, a panel discussed the issues with "Public/Private Sector Roles in Financing/ Building Projects." The panel explained that there are over 50,000 water and wastewater systems in the United States (more than half of these serve fewer than 500 people), many of which will likely struggle to meet future system and regulatory demands. As pressures on small systems increase, there will be increasing mergers and acquisitions. Also, as the cost to users increases, the private market for water and wastewater services will likely grow but not until the cost of public systems reaches that of private systems.

## United States and Mexico Sign Colorado River Agreement

Coronado, CA—November 20, 2012

Representatives from the United States and Mexico on the International Boundary Commission met to sign Minute 319, an agreement entitled “Interim International Cooperative Measures in the Colorado River Basin through 2017 and Extension of Minute 318 Cooperative Measures to Address the Continued Effects of the April 2010 Earthquake in the Mexicali Valley, Baja California” (see [Minute 319](#)).

This five-year agreement, approved by both governments, provides for a series of joint cooperative actions between the United States and Mexico. Elements of the agreement include:

- Implementing efforts to enhance water infrastructure and promote sharing, storing, and conserving water;
- Establishing proactive basin operations by applying water delivery reductions when Lake Mead reservoir conditions are low to avert more severe reductions in the future;
- Extending humanitarian measures from a 2010 agreement, [Minute 318](#), to allow Mexico to defer delivery of a portion of its Colorado River allotment while it continues to make repairs to earthquake-damaged infrastructure;
- Establishing a program of Intentionally Created Mexican Allocation (ICMA) whereby Mexico could temporarily reduce its order of Colorado River water, allowing that water to be delivered to Mexico in the future; and
- Promoting the ecological health of the Colorado River Delta.

The following US and Mexican officials attended the signing ceremony: Ken Salazar, United States Secretary of the Interior; Michael Connor, Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Reclamation; Ambassador Julian Ventura Valero, Undersecretary for North America, Mexico’s Ministry of Foreign Relations; and Engineer Jose Luis Luege Tamargo, General Director of Mexico’s National Water Commission.

See also the following two press releases:

- Secretary Salazar Joins U.S. and Mexico Delegations for Historic Colorado River Water Agreement Ceremony, see [release](#).
- Commission Signs Colorado River Agreement, see [release](#).

## Agency Announcements

11/02: USGS and Google Partner on Emergency Alerts, see [release](#).

11/05: Reclamation Releases Narrows Project Final Environmental Impact Statement, see [release](#).

11/06: Corps to begin drought conservation measures, see [release](#).

11/07: Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries Reopen Public Comment Period on Process for Identifying Habitat Essential to Species Protected Under the ESA, see [release](#).

11/08: Experimental Release from Glen Canyon Dam to Benefit Grand Canyon, see [release](#).

11/09: USACE Galveston District to hold public hearing for Coastal Water Authority’s Luce Bayou Interbasin Transfer Project, see [release](#).

11/12: New Titan Supercomputer Named Fastest in the World, see [release](#).

11/14: Weather data from nation’s largest wind farms could improve U.S. models, forecasts - Private companies share weather data with NOAA, see [release](#).

11/14: Project to Support Future Global Food Security Enhanced by Major NASA Grant, see [release](#).

11/14: Interior Hosts Navajo and Hopi Leadership for Water Settlement Discussions, see [release](#).

11/15: EPA Launches “SepticSmart” to Prevent Costly Septic System Problems, Protect Environment, see [release](#).

11/15: Streams Show Signs of Degradation at Earliest Stages of Urban Development, see [release](#).

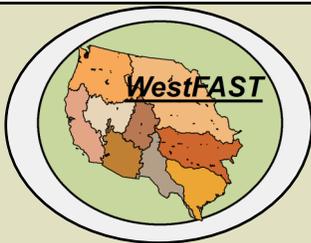
11/19: Energy Department Announces New Clean Cities Projects to Diversify U.S. Fuel Economy, Prepare for Advanced Vehicles, see [release](#).

11/19: Secretary Salazar Implements New Protocol on Colorado River with High Flow Water Release from Glen Canyon Dam to Benefit Grand Canyon, see [release](#).

11/20: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Annual List of Candidates for Endangered Species Act Protection, see [release](#).

## Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **April 3-5, 2013:** WSWC Spring Council Meeting, Denver, CO.
- **June 24-26, 2013:** WSWC Summer Council Meetings, Casper, WY.



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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