

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:

Jean Thomas (Chair), Forest Service
jathomas02@fs.fed.us

Becky Fulkerson (Vice Chair),
Reclamation rfulkerson@usbr.gov

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

Roger Gorke, EPA
Gorke.roger@epa.gov

Pixie Hamilton, USGS
pahamilt@usgs.gov

Lee Koss, BLM
lkoss@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

Craig Zamuda, DOE
Craig.Zamuda@Hq.Doe.Gov

Clare Mendelsohn, DOD
clare.mendelsohn@us.af.mil

Eric Stevens, Federal Liaison
ericstevens@swc.utah.gov

WestFAST News

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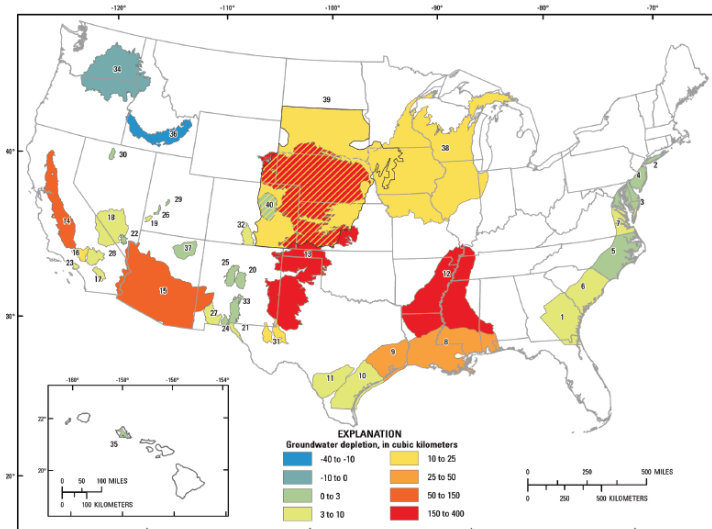
USGS Releases Results of Study of Aquifers

The U.S. Geological Survey documents that the Nation's aquifers are being drawn down. The May 2013 report "[Groundwater Depletion in the United States \(1900-2008\)](#)" evaluates long-term cumulative depletion volumes in 40 separate aquifers in the United States, bringing together information from previous references and from new analyses. The study explains that, from 1900 to 2008, the Nation's aquifers, decreased by more than twice the volume of water found in Lake Erie. Also, groundwater depletion in the United States in the years 2000-2008 may explain the observed global sea-level rise during that same period.

According to the study, the use of groundwater resources for agricultural, industrial, and municipal purposes has greatly expanded in the United States. When groundwater is withdrawn from subsurface storage faster than it is recharged by precipitation or other water sources, the result is groundwater depletion, causing land subsidence, reduced well yields, and diminished spring and stream flows.

While it appears that the rate of groundwater depletion across the country has increased markedly, the maximum rates have occurred during the most recent period of the study (2000-2008), when the depletion rate averaged almost 25 cubic kilometers per year. For comparison, 9.2 cubic kilometers per year is the historical average calculated over the 1900-2008 timespan of the study.

The High Plains or Ogallala aquifer underlies more than 170,000 square miles of the Nation's heartland and represents the principal source of water for irrigation and drinking in this agricultural area. Substantial pumping of the High Plains aquifer for irrigation since the 1940s has resulted in large water-table declines that exceed 160 feet in places. See [link](#) for more.



WRDA 2013 in the US House

On May 15, the Senate passed the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2013 (S. 601) by a vote of 83-14. Next, the bill will go to the House of Representatives.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Ranking Member David Vitter (R-LA) introduced the \$12.2B bill, which would automatically authorize U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that satisfy specific criteria.

The Senate version of the bill includes amended Sections 2014 and 2015. Many provisions from earlier versions of the bill remain, including provisions that would establish a flood and drought monitoring program in the Upper Missouri River Basin, a national levee safety program, and a Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) pilot program. See [link](#) for more.

BLM Issues Rule on Fracking

On May 16, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a revised version of its proposed rule for hydraulic fracturing on public lands. Like earlier versions, the rule would: (1) require disclosure of chemicals used in fracturing activities on public lands, with certain protections for proprietary information; (2) verify that fluids used during fracturing operations do not contaminate groundwater; and (3) ensure that operators have a water management plan in place for handling fluids that flow back to the surface. The rule includes a new variance process that would allow states to propose

their own standards if they can prove that their regulations meet or exceed the BLM rule's requirements. BLM will accept comments for 30 days. Follow this [link](#) for more.

2013 Interagency MOU on Coordination of Conservation Demonstration Areas

Earlier this year, nine federal agencies signed an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for [Coordination of Landscape and Watershed-Scale Conservation Demonstration Areas](#). The nine federal agencies include: Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Army Corps of Engineers, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The MOU focuses on existing interagency large landscape demonstration areas that are part of the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative.

The purpose is "to strengthen and formalize the institutional framework . . . [to] better enable cooperation, communication, and collaboration among the Federal partners on large-scale landscape and watershed conservation demonstration areas." Large landscape conservation facilitates collaborative discussions and sharing or leveraging resources to meet common needs related to landscape and watershed conservation. Common needs are identified locally through a variety of efforts that often involve federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal governments; and communities, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens. See the Partnership Resource Center "[Emerging Issues](#)" page with additional information about Large Landscape Conservation and the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

Agency News

5/01: Cooperative Watershed Management Program Seeking Applicants to Establish or Expand Watershed Groups through WaterSMART; see [link](#).

05/02: USDA and EPA Release New Report on Honey Bee Health; see [link](#).

05/02: NASA Opens New Era in Measuring Western U.S. Snowpack; see [link](#).

05/02: First GOES-R instrument Ready to Be Installed onto Spacecraft; see [link](#).

05/02: CSU, EPA Agreement Increases Opportunities for Future Environmental Stewards; see [link](#).

05/03: EPA Strengthens Conflict of Interest Review Process for Science Review Panels; see [link](#).

05/03: NASA Study Projects Warming-Driven Changes in Global

Rainfall; see [link](#).

05/03: USACE IWR Advances Consistent Methodological Approach for Considering Social Vulnerability and Other Social Effects; see [link](#).

05/07: Decades-old Nitrate Found to Affect Stream Water Quality; see [link](#).

05/08: Members to Provide Guidance on Adaptation Science Initiatives; see [link](#).

05/09: Landsat Images Provide the Gold Standard for New Earth Applications; see [link](#).

05/09: Forest Service Report Spotlights Fire Risk for Homes on the Edge of Wildlands; see [link](#).

05/09: Grant Helps Educate Tribes on Drought Management; see [link](#).

05/09: Bureau of Reclamation Releases Updated Climate Data for Water Managers; see [link](#).

05/10: Federal Agencies Expand Urban Waterway Revitalization Efforts in Communities Across the Nation; see [link](#).

05/10: Water Quality Index for Agricultural Runoff, Streamlined and Accessible; see [link](#).

05/13: Secretaries Vilsack and Jewell Highlight Federal Preparedness for 2013 Western Wildfire Season; see [link](#).

05/13: Energy Department Launches Public-Private Partnership to Deploy Hydrogen Infrastructure; see [link](#).

05/13: April Surge in Snow Has Small Impact: Drought Continues in Much of the West; see [link](#).

05/13: Warmer Springs Causing Loss of Snow Cover Throughout the Rocky Mountains; see [link](#).

05/15: Spring 2012 Earliest on Record; see [link](#).

05/16: National Assessment Shows Geographic Distributions and Trends of Pesticide Use, 1992-2009; see [link](#).

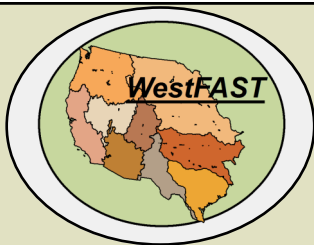
05/22: Interior Awards Grants in Eleven Western States to Improve Water Management, Supplies; see [link](#).

05/23: Reclamation, Partners Will Study Water Supplies in Five Western River Basins; see [link](#).

05/28: Interior Leaders Convene Meeting to Discuss Moving Forward on Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Challenges; see [link](#).

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **June 24-26, 2013:** [Summer Council Meeting](#); Casper, Wyoming; Hilton Garden Inn.
- **August 5-7, 2013:** [WSWC and CDWR Workshop on Quantifying Drought Impacts](#); San Diego, California; Doubletree Downtown.
- **August 13-15, 2013:** [Indian Water Rights Settlement Symposium](#); Santa Fe, New Mexico; Hilton Santa Fe at Buffalo Thunder.
- **October 2-4, 2013:** Fall Council Meeting; Deadwood, South Dakota; The Lodge at Deadwood.



WestFAST News is published monthly. To get an Agency Announcement published or to get added to the WestFAST News distribution list contact:

Eric Stevens, WestFAST Federal Liaison

Email: ericstevens@wswc.utah.gov

Phone: 801-685-2555

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