

Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 13 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 2014

Federal Agencies engage in third Western Governors Drought Forum

Representatives from EPA, Reclamation, NASA and the USDA participated in the third workshop of the Western Governors' Drought Forum - "Drought Impacts and Solutions in the Agricultural Sector." The workshop, a two-day meeting (Nov. 13-14) at the State Capitol in Sacramento, California, was organized by the Western Governors' Association (WGA) for the Chairman's Initiative of WGA Chairman and Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval.

California Governor Jerry Brown welcomed representatives from western states to Sacramento noting "I think the drought will test our imagination and our science, our technology and our political capacity to collaborate."

Jared Blumenfeld, EPA Region 9 Administrator, participated in a roundtable discussion on "What is Drought?" And Pablo Arroyave, Deputy Regional Director, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, was part of a case study during the workshop on "Cross-Agency Collaboration in Addressing Record Drought."

Jay Famiglietti, Senior Water Scientist, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology discussed "The GRACE Tellus Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment" noting that the remote sensing technology, which maps the earth's gravity fields, "can observe drought from space ... It allows for spatial mapping and mapping through time. It can see trend lines and the amount of water being lost, including surface vs. groundwater."

Oscar Gonzales, California State Executive Director, USDA Farm Service Agency, speaking on policy issues related to drought response in California stated that "seven federal agencies meet weekly to leverage federal resources" and noted that "there's a realization that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work."

Governor Sandoval has initiated this year-long series of meetings that include senior water, energy and agriculture policy leaders from government and the private sector. The meetings will lead to a report of best practices to be released next June.

To read more about the Western Governors Drought Forum go to this [link](#).

Western Governors comment on concerns over definition of CWA "Waters of the United States" (Nov. 18)

Western Governors have [submitted comments](#) outlining several substantive concerns on the proposed rule regarding the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act (CWA).

The proposed rule to define "Waters of the U.S." in the CWA was published in the Federal Register in April 2014 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps).

Western Governors sent letters to the agencies before and after the release of the proposed rule. In their recent formal comments, the Western Governors outline several key concerns, including (1) recognition of the authority of states to manage water within their boundaries, (2) the use of any blanket statement of connectivity of waters as a basis for any broader federal jurisdiction under the CWA than what is now suggested under the proposed rule, (3) the potential for the proposed jurisdictional rule to impact state economies, and (4) engagement of states by federal agencies in the earliest states of rule development.

The comments were sent to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army, in a letter signed by Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, WGA Chairman, and Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, Chairman, WGA Vice Chairman.

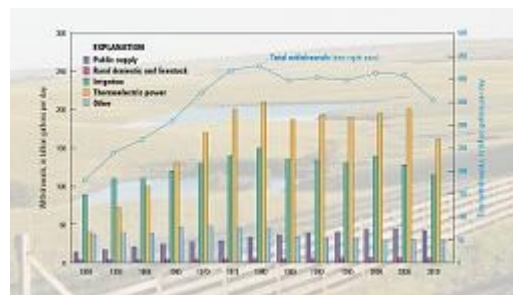
Go to this [link](#) to read more.

USGS Reports National Water-Use at Lowest Levels Since Before 1970

Water use across the country reached its lowest recorded level in nearly 45 years. According to a new [USGS report](#), about 355 billion gallons of water per day (Bgal/d) were withdrawn for use in the entire United States during 2010.



The 2010 estimated value represents a 13 percent reduction of [water use from 2005](#), when about 410 Bgal/d were withdrawn, and the lowest level since before 1970.



Trends in total water withdrawals by water-use category, 1950–2010. ([Larger image](#))

“Reaching this 45-year low shows the positive trends in conservation that stem from improvements in water-use technologies and management,” said Mike Connor, Deputy Secretary

of the Interior. “Even as the U.S. population continues to grow, people are learning to be more water conscious and do their part to help sustain the limited freshwater resources in the country.”

Water withdrawn for thermoelectric power was the largest use nationally, with the other leading uses being irrigation, public supply and self-supplied industrial water, respectively. Withdrawals declined in each of these categories. Collectively, all of these uses represented 94 percent of total withdrawals from 2005–2010.

Thermoelectric power declined 20 percent, the largest percent decline. Irrigation withdrawals (all freshwater) declined 9 percent. Public-supply withdrawals declined 5 percent. Self-supplied industrial withdrawals declined 12 percent.

A number of factors can be attributed to the 20 percent decline in thermoelectric-power withdrawals, including an increase in the number of power plants built or converted since the 1970’s that use more efficient cooling-system technologies, declines in withdrawals to protect aquatic habitat and environments, power plant closures and a decline in the use of coal to fuel power plants.

“Irrigation withdrawals in the United States continued to decline since 2005, and more croplands were reported as using higher-efficiency irrigation systems in 2010,” said Molly Maupin, USGS hydrologist. “Shifts toward more sprinkler and micro-irrigation systems nationally and declining withdrawals in the West have contributed to a drop in the national average application rate from 2.32 acre-feet per acre in 2005 to 2.07 acre-feet per acre in 2010.”

For the first time, withdrawals for public water supply declined between 2005 and 2010, despite a 4 percent increase in the nation’s total population. The number of people served by public-supply systems continued to increase and the public-supply per capita use declined to 89 gallons per day in 2010 from 100 gallons per day in 2005.

Declines in industrial withdrawals can be attributed to factors such as greater efficiencies in industrial processes, more emphasis on water reuse and recycling, and the 2008 U.S. recession, resulting in lower industrial production in major water-using industries.

Go to this [link](#) to learn more.

Third High-Flow Release from Glen Canyon Dam (Nov. 10)

The Department of the Interior initiated its third high-flow release from Glen Canyon Dam November 10, 2014 under an innovative science-based experimental protocol. The goal of the release is to help restore the environment by creating flood-like conditions below Glen Canyon Dam, which rebuild sandbars that are important habitat and recreational resources.

During the 2014 high-flow experiment, high volumes of water were released through Glen Canyon Dam’s powerplant and four outlet tubes. The duration of the peak release of approximately 37,500 cubic-feet-per-second was 96 hours. The annual release volume from Lake Powell will not change as a result of the 2014 HFE, no additional water will be released.



Water being released from Glen Canyon Dam river outlet tubes during 2013 High Flow Experiment

“Dams have impacts, but as we have learned over the last 50 years, we can operate Glen Canyon Dam in ways that both meet our demands for water and hydropower, but also achieve our goals for natural resources and recreation,” said Deputy Commissioner for Operations Lowell Pimley.

Similar experimental releases have been conducted over the years. The releases include continued scientific research, monitoring, and data collecting along the Colorado River between Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Mead, while continuing to meet water delivery and hydropower needs. These successful experiments were the result of extensive collaboration among various agencies of the Department of the Interior, including the U.S. Geological Survey’s Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as the Colorado River Basin States.

Click [here](#) to read more.

Bureau of Reclamation to Invest in Water and Power Research

Following a year of record drought, water managers throughout the west are searching for information and ideas to ensure a reliable and sustainable water supply. To meet this growing need for information, Bureau of Reclamation Principal Deputy Commissioner Estevan López announced on November 19, 2014 that Reclamation has awarded \$9.2 million for 131 research projects. The complete list of selected projects is available at www.usbr.gov/research.



“Reclamation and its partners in the West are confronting an ever widening imbalance between supply and demand,” López said. “By investing in research to develop innovative solutions we can provide tools to guide a sustainable water and power future for the West.”

Although Reclamation and its customers face many challenges, particular emphasis is given to addressing knowledge gaps in five research priority areas.

- Increasing water supplies through advanced water treatment technologies
- Optimizing water availability under a changing and variable climate
- Controlling invasive Zebra and Quagga Mussels that can interrupt water and power deliveries
- Optimizing Hydropower and other forms of renewable energy
- Improving water infrastructure reliability and safety

The identified knowledge gaps are filled by both competed and directed research.

Partnerships are key for Reclamation in completing these research projects. This year, Reclamation has leveraged its \$9.2 million with an estimated \$3.8 million in non-federal cost-shared funding. Partners include federal and non-federal agencies, research centers and laboratories, universities and private companies. In addition to funding, partners also serve as subject matter experts and advisors for the research projects.

Research projects are identified using two different methodologies. 1. Reclamation hosts an internal competition where research is proposed by Reclamation employees. Once received the proposals are ranked, reviewed to ensure they are relevant to Reclamation's mission and checked to ensure they are technically valid. 2. The Research and Development Office facilitates forming and funding high performing research teams that can meet Reclamation's high priority needs that are not well or comprehensively addressed through the internal competitive process. These teams are typically a mix of federal and non-federal experts and organizations.

Reclamation's Research and Development Office uses science and technology to advance Reclamation's mission to manage, develop and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. To learn more, please visit www.usbr.gov/research.

USGS/EPA Data Show Northern Idaho Superfund Cleanup is Improving Water Quality (Nov. 24)

A [new report](#) published by the U.S. Geological Survey shows that U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-led efforts to clean up historical mining contamination in the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane River basins are improving water quality.

From the late 19th century through 1987, more than 130 million tons of lead, zinc and silver sulfide ores were mined from the Coeur

d'Alene mining district. Ore processing often included dumping large amounts of metal-rich tailings into and along area streams that then transported those metals downstream.

In 2004, the USGS, in cooperation with the EPA, established a



The South Fork Coeur d'Alene River near Kellogg, Idaho has been impacted by historical mining activities. Since 2004. ([High resolution image](#))

water-quality monitoring network totaling 18 sites from Mullan to Post Falls, Idaho. USGS hydrologist Greg Clark analyzed water-quality data collected from October 2009 through September 2013. Clark also examined data dating back to the early 1990s to look for any long-term trends. Results of those analyses include:

- Concentrations of cadmium, lead and zinc have decreased significantly in streams throughout the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane River basins since the early 1990s. In the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River near Pinehurst, the concentrations of each of the three metals decreased by about 65 percent between 1992 and 2013. In most streams, however, concentrations of cadmium and zinc continue to exceed water-quality criteria established to protect aquatic organisms from toxic exposure to these metals.

- The rate of decrease in metal concentrations in streams has slowed since 2003. Continued decreases will require a reduction in the contributions of metals to the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River from Canyon and Ninemile Creeks and from groundwater underlying the Central Impoundment Area near Kellogg, Idaho. The EPA is implementing remedial actions in these locations.



USGS hydrologist Greg Clark measures streamflow on Government Gulch Creek, a tributary to the Coeur d'Alene River in northern Idaho. Streamflow data collected are included in the Coeur d'Alene Basin Environmental Monitoring Program the USGS conducts in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency. ([High resolution image](#))

- Coeur d'Alene Lake continues to receive large amounts of metals from upstream sources. From 2009 through 2013, the lake received an annual average of nearly 5 tons of cadmium, 400 tons of lead and 700 tons of zinc, about 99 percent of



which were delivered from the Coeur d'Alene River. Of these totals, about 1.5 tons of cadmium, 380 tons of lead and 350 tons of zinc settled in the lake; the remainder flowed out of the lake to the Spokane River.

“This is good news for the people of the basin,” said Rick Albright, EPA Superfund cleanup director in Seattle. “We still have a long way to go in our cleanup efforts, but it’s nice to have scientific confirmation that we’ve made solid, measurable progress in reducing metal loads and improving area water quality. The USGS report underscores that we’re on our way to celebrating the basin’s recovery and ensuring that it remains a beautiful, healthy place to live, work and play.”

Get more information at this [link](#).

Federal News

[11/3: Helping Managers Protect the San Antonio River Basin Through Sediment Modeling](#)

[11/3: A Statement from U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Final Synthesis Report](#)

[11/3: Reclamation Releases Final Environmental Documents For Three Projects to Protect Endangered Species](#)

[11/4: USGS and Canada Reach Confluence in Monitoring Stream-flow](#)

[11/4: BLM to Assess 40 miles of Wood River, ID](#)

[11/4: Tracking the Nitrate Pulse to the Gulf of Mexico](#)

[11/5: Commitment to Address Climate Change Issues Highlighted in Reclamation Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)

[11/6: Building the Water Theme of the White House Climate Data Initiative](#)

[11/6: Students Inspired in Climate Change Partnership Program](#)

[11/6: BLM Teams up Yuba Watershed Institute to "Save the Big Trees" \(11-6-2014\)](#)

[11/6: Reclamation Announces Revision of the Standard Criteria for Evaluating Water Management Plans](#)

[11/6: BLM Issues Rapid Ecoregional Assessments for the Northwestern Plains and Middle Rockies](#)

[11/7: Draft Environmental Documents Available for Central Valley Project Interim Renewal Contracts for Two Water Districts](#)

[11/7: EPA Grants Support Tribal Environmental Programs in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska](#)

[11/12: Migratory Bird Conservation Commission Approves \\$28 Million to Conserve Waterfowl, Shorebirds and Other Species in 16 States](#)

[11/13: Forest Service exceeds yearly forest restoration goals](#)

[11/13: Rice Farmer Helps Migratory Birds, Cleans Water on Texas Coast - USDA.gov](#)

[11/14: Quagga Mussel Update Nov 2014](#)

[11/15: USGS Assesses Current Groundwater-Quality Conditions in the Williston Basin Oil Production Area](#)

[11/17: BLM Alaska Releases Guidance for Reclamation of Placer-Mined Streams](#)

[11/17: New Climate Resilience Toolkit helps communities prepare for a changing world](#)

[11/17: USGS-NASA Award Recognizes Innovations in Earth Observation](#)

[11/21: Secretary Jewell, Governor Hickenlooper, Colorado Congressional Delegation Announce Landmark Settlement for Colorado’s Roan Plateau that Balances Conservation, Oil & Gas Development](#)

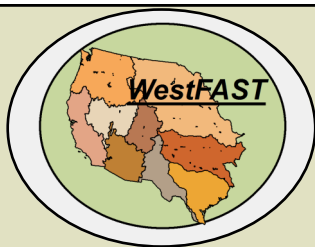
State News

[Eight Western Governors join Energy Secretary Moniz, Interior Secretary Jewell at Winter Meeting in Las Vegas](#)

[Watch videos of case studies presented at first two Drought Forum Workshops](#)

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **April 15-17 2015, Spring (177th) Council Meeting**, Tulsa, Oklahoma
- **July 2015, Summer (178th) Council Meeting and WSWC 50th Anniversary**, Lake Tahoe Nevada



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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