

WestFAST

Western States Federal Agency Support Team

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WestFAST Agencies

2012 Work Plan

(July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013)

June 2012

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Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST)

FY 2012 Work Plan (7/1/2012-6/30/2013)

We hereby declare that we as WESTFAST partners will collaborate with the Western States Water Council to guide the development of an appropriate action plan for this partnership.

- An excerpt from *Declaration of Cooperation*

1.0 Introduction

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 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*). WestFAST was formed to support the WSWC in the implementation of the *Next Steps Report*. Some of the areas that the report identifies for federal/state collaboration include: Water policy, Water to meet future demands, Water infrastructure, Indian water rights, Climate change, and Endangered species.

In 2012, WestFAST will work on three of the six focus areas from the *Next Steps Report*: Water to Meet Future Demands, Water Infrastructure Needs and Strategies, and Climate Change Impacts. Some highlights of what WestFAST will do include:

- Better enabling the exchange of federal and state water data.
- Developing 'Principles of Collaboration' that can be shared among the WestFAST agencies on how to better engage the states.
- Facilitating coordination between various federal programs being implemented within the Colorado River Basin.

Additionally, WestFAST was formed to promote collaboration between the federal agencies. In 2012, WestFAST will continue to promote information sharing between agencies, including providing a forum by which that communication can take place; WestFAST will continue to participate in a number of cross-agency initiatives; and WestFAST will continue to conduct outreach to the federal community on the importance of coordination and the role that WestFAST can play in that coordination.

2.0 Support WSWC in implementation of the *Next Steps Report* and the WSWC work plan

WestFAST plans to initiate or continue a number of activities related to the recommendations from the *Next Steps Report*. Additionally, as follow-on to the recommendation that led to the formation of

WestFAST, WestFAST will seek to improve state/federal collaboration by developing principles of collaboration that can help guide federal agencies in how they can better engage the states.

Another significant role that WestFAST plays in coordinating with the WSWC is in communicating to the WSWC on various issues of concern to the WSWC. WestFAST will continue to provide this support with continued focus on particular water quality issues, new initiatives (i.e. WaterSMART and the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs)), endangered species, emerging technologies, the water/energy nexus, and federal reserved water rights.

2.1 Supporting Next Steps Recommendations

A great number of WestFAST's activities are in support of the goals outlined in the *Next Steps Report*. In 2011, WestFAST successfully completed several activities in support of the *Next Steps Report*, with particular emphasis on the recommendations made under the Water to Meet Future Needs section of the report. In 2011, WestFAST, in cooperation with the WSWC, initiated work on the Water Use Data Exchange, which is intended to make significant improvements in how data are shared between states, as well as between the state and federal agencies. (For the 2011 WestFAST accomplishments see the [WestFAST Accomplishments Report](#)).

Below is a list of recommendations from the *Next Steps Report* that WestFAST will focus on in 2012, as well as the specific activities that WestFAST will perform, along with the expected outcomes.

- A. 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*).

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST will develop a 'Principles of Collaboration' document that will describe a list of best practices that federal agencies can take in order to better engage the states. This document will provide case-studies of what has worked, and will gather information from existing federal outreach and communication programs. This document will also provide information on how and why a federal agency may be restricted on the types of outreach they can do with the states (i.e. under a rulemaking process). The purpose of this document will be to provide an easy-reference guide to any federal official who is seeking to implement a new policy, roll-out a new initiative, or seeking input on future planning efforts.

Expected Outcomes:

1. A 'Principles of Collaboration' document will be developed, shared with the WSWC and the WestFAST agencies, and posted to the WestFAST web site.

Water to Meet Future Demands

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

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC on the implementation of the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) (see: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/wade/>).
2. WestFAST will support the WSWC in the development of a State Capabilities Assessment Report that will describe the current state capabilities in sharing water availability, use, allocation, and planning data.
3. In coordination with the WSWC, WestFAST will conduct site-visits to the WSWC-member states to get buy-in and feedback on WaDE.
4. WestFAST will support the WSWC in the development of a common data standard for sharing water availability, use, allocation, and planning data.
5. WestFAST, in coordination with the WGA, DOE, WSWC, and the Sandia Labs will assist with the development of a metric that can be used to indicate relative water availability for energy production throughout the west in support of the Western Electricity Coordinating Council's (WECC) long-term planning process.
6. WestFAST will coordinate with the WSWC on hosting a 1/2-day session at the Summer 2012 WSWC meeting on WaDE.
7. WestFAST will support the WSWC in designing web services that the states can deploy to share their water data.
8. WestFAST will identify ways that the WestFAST member agencies can better share data in a consistent format.
9. WestFAST will support the WSWC in the development of a 'Central Portal' to help synthesize and visualize the state and federal water data.
10. WestFAST will continue to engage with the USGS Water Census to ensure that WaDE is complementary to that effort.
11. WestFAST will give a presentation at EPA's Exchange Network meeting on WaDE in order to encourage better interaction between water resource and water quality agencies.
12. WestFAST will support the WSWC in hosting a Water Information Management Symposium meeting in 2013.



Expected Outcomes:

1. A draft Schema for sharing water availability, use, allocation, and planning data.
2. A proposed approach for sharing water observations (i.e. streamgaging, SNOTEL, reservoir height, precipitation data).
3. A final report on State Capabilities.
4. A synthesis of state methods used to determine water availability and consumptive use.
5. A common metric for determining relative water availability for use in WECC's long-term planning model.
6. Draft web service specifications that can be implemented by the states for sharing water availability, use, allocation, and planning data.

Water Infrastructure Needs and Strategies

- C. 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*).

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST will support the WSWC in hosting an Infrastructure Symposium in November 2012.
2. WestFAST will begin a discussion on how the federal agencies can better support the states in augmenting water supply and managing infrastructure to meet future needs.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Infrastructure needs have continued to outpace the resources available to address those needs. Prioritization of projects is becoming increasingly critical. Through this discussion, WestFAST hopes to support the states in their prioritization process and also help the states better understand the federal tools and resources that are available.

- D. Objective 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*).

Numerous federal efforts are currently underway in the Colorado River Basin. Although many of these efforts are already well coordinated between the various parties, there still may be room for better coordination. In 2011, WestFAST published a report on various water availability studies being conducted in the west (see:

<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/westfast/reports/federalwateravailabilitystudies.pdf>).

In December 2011, DOI published a report on activities in the Colorado River Basin (see:

<http://www.usbr.gov/WaterSMART/docs/ColoradoRiverPilotProject.pdf>) as part of the

WaterSMART program. The Colorado River Basin has received extensive federal focus, and

is of significant importance to the western states. WestFAST is in a unique position to provide a focal point for collaboration within the basin.

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST will reach out to the member agencies' regional offices to discover what types of coordination are already taking place.
2. WestFAST will host a Colorado River Basin Forum in Boulder, CO to bring together the various federal entities who are conducting studies within the basin.
3. WestFAST will provide support to those studies being conducted in the basin by providing a means to communicate the goals of those studies to the western states and also provide a vehicle by which states could provide input into the studies.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Better coordination among various studies being conducted in the Colorado River Basin.
2. Demonstrate the value of these studies to the western states and how they support the missions of the state agencies.

Climate Change Impacts

- E. Objective 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*).

In June 2011, NOAA and the WGA signed an MOU to "... improve the development, coordination and dissemination of climate information to support the adaptation priorities and resource management decisions of WGA members. This would include strengthening existing ties between science and decision-making regarding climate variability and change."

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST members will participate in the Outlook Forums being conducted as part of this MOU as appropriate.
2. WestFAST will be used as a venue to discuss issues raised in these forums that require additional input from other federal agencies.
3. WestFAST will identify opportunities for collaboration with other WestFAST initiatives (i.e. WaDE).

Expected Outcomes:

1. Provide support to the WSWC under this MOU and provide the linkage to other WestFAST initiatives.

2.2 Providing Information and Coordination on Federal Programs to the WSWC

WestFAST was formed to facilitate collaboration with the western states. There are numerous federal activities that are underway that require input and participation from the states. Additionally, there are specific issues that the WSWC is interested in that require continued coordination with the WestFAST team. In 2011, WestFAST provided several presentations at WSWC meetings, as well as several specific briefings for WSWC members outside of the WSWC meetings. These opportunities for discussion are one of the major benefits of having formed WestFAST. In 2012, WestFAST will continue this collaboration, and in particular will focus on the following actions:

WestFAST Actions:

1. WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC in defining best practices for addressing non-tribal federal reserved water rights.
2. WestFAST will coordinate with the WSWC on the development of a 'Western States Water Vision' which the WSWC intends to incorporate as part of the 2012 Water Report.
3. WestFAST will continue to coordinate with the WSWC on the policies surrounding liability from the clean-up of abandoned mines (Good Samaritan).
4. WestFAST will continue to provide information on the LCCs.
5. WestFAST will continue to provide information on WaterSMART activities.
6. As the WestFAST agencies continue to discuss the Water/Energy nexus, WestFAST will coordinate with the WSWC.
7. WestFAST will continue to provide the WSWC with information on the use of LandSAT and other remote sensing capabilities.
8. WestFAST will continue to coordinate with the WSWC on endangered species issues.

Expected Outcomes:

1. The WSWC will have a greater understanding of various federal initiatives and issues.
2. Federal agencies will gain a better understanding of state perspectives on various issues.

3.0 Interagency Coordination

The federal agencies that make up WestFAST all have unique roles within western water management. WestFAST provides a means for those agencies to collaborate in a way that they may not otherwise be able. WestFAST is currently comprised of 11 federal agencies, but discussion is underway to add the Department of Defense (from a military facilities perspective) and the National Park Service. This will expand the number of federal agencies to 13. This Work Plan will focus on three key areas in which the WestFAST agencies can collaborate in 2012:

1. Information Sharing
2. Participation in Cross-Agency Groups
3. Outreach

3.1 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.

To help facilitate this discussion, WestFAST undertook a new project in 2011 to begin cataloging the initiatives from each of the federal agencies. This catalog will be made available on the WestFAST web site, and will be maintained by the WestFAST members. WestFAST plans to make this catalog available in 2012.

WestFAST has also begun holding regular “Informational Meetings” on topics of interest to the WestFAST members. The first of these meetings was held in February 2012 and focused on the Water/Energy nexus. These meetings are open to any federal employee and are advertised broadly by the WestFAST team. These meetings are intended to provide a forum for discussion on relevant topics that has a broader reach than just the WestFAST team members. Some future topics of discussion for 2012 include, but may not be limited to:

- USFS's Watershed Condition Framework
- USACE Federal Toolbox
- EPA's Urban Waters Initiative
- Value of Water
- USGS's Water Census
- Remote Sensing Capabilities



3.2 Participation in Cross-Agency Groups

Another role of WestFAST is to participate in various cross-agency groups. WestFAST can provide a unique western perspective, and provide input based on interactions with the western states. WestFAST's participation in these groups provides additional linkages to other federal agencies, other groups, and other committees that may not otherwise occur.

Some examples of activities that WestFAST plans on engaging in 2012 include:

- **USGS Water Census:** The Water Census is a new initiative being led by the USGS. Its goal is to gain a better understanding of water use and availability throughout the U.S. The Water Census needs to be tightly coupled with activities being undertaken as part of the Water Data Exchange being led by the WSWC. WestFAST will continue to engage in Water Census activities in order to ensure that information is being shared between these two efforts.

- **Western Regional Partnership:** The Western Regional Partnership (WRP) is a Department of Defense led collaboration between federal, state, and tribal interests. They are working on issues in the southwestern U.S. WestFAST will continue to interact with the WRP. The WRP has already identified WestFAST and the WSWC as the go-to groups for water issues.
- **Hydrologic Information Sharing Subgroup under the Subcommittee on Water Availability and Quality (SWAQ):** This group is exploring ways for federal agencies to better share hydrologic information. WestFAST is a member of this group and will continue to provide linkages from this group to the western states.

3.3 Outreach

WestFAST is a relatively new organization. Since its original formation in 2008, efforts have been made to improve WestFAST visibility. This is primarily done via the WestFAST web site (<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/WestFAST.htm>) as well as through the WestFAST newsletter. In addition to this, WestFAST is beginning to reach out to other organizations to inform them on this unique federal/state collaboration. To continue to improve WestFAST visibility, in 2012 WestFAST will undertake the following activities:

1. Maintain the WestFAST web site with current WestFAST activities and events.
2. Broadly publish information about the WestFAST 'Informational Meetings' to federal employees.
3. Present on the WestFAST/WSWC collaboration approach at the National Water Quality Monitoring Conference.
4. Continue to publish the WestFAST Newsletter on a monthly basis.
5. Develop WestFAST Semi-Annual Reports that chronicle the activities of WestFAST.

