

WestFAST News



The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 11 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 in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.

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164th Western States Water Council Meeting

San Diego, CA—October 2010

The WSWC met in San Diego, CA. The meeting was well attended by WestFAST members as well as by other Federal Agency representatives. NASA provided one special session on remote sensing capabilities, and USGS provided a special session on the Water Census. Jane Lyder, the Department of Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, discussed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities that pertain to water. Lyder said a sustainable water strategy is a priority for the Administration and that threats to water are a leading indicator of impacts related to climate change. In particular, she discussed the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) and their role in developing a collaborative, science-based approach for planning for climate change.

The WSWC adopted one external position urging the Administration to enhance NASA's "...focus areas on research for water resources applications, and to promote long term engagement with the [WSWC] and the state and regional agencies in the western U.S. responsible for water management and water policy to maximize benefits to the public from NASA's existing and future investments in Earth observations, Earth system models and systems engineering." The WSWC also modified Position #293 to discuss implementation of the SECURE Water Act and to express concern that many of the programs and activities that the Act authorizes, including USGS streamgaging activities, remain unfunded or underfunded.

The WSWC also discussed EPA's Water Transfer Rule exempting water transfers from NPDES permits and the 11th Circuit Court's ruling upholding the rule. Other topics of discussion were climate change, emerging contaminants, the Safe Drinking Water Act Arsenic Standard, a 6th Circuit Court decision that will require NPDES permits for pesticide applications, an update on the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), and water quality and water quantity data sharing.

The next WSWC meeting will be in Santa Fe, New Mexico on April 12-15, 2011.



WestFAST Cooperates with WSWC to Hold First Symposium on Western Water Resources Infrastructure Needs

San Antonio, TX—November 2010

WSWC and the Texas Water Development Board, in cooperation with WestFAST convened the first symposium on water resources infrastructure. The symposium focused on the significant gap between infrastructure needs and the funding available to pay for those needs. Speakers were chosen from Federal and State agencies, local and county planners, and the construction and financial sectors.

Presenters and participants stressed the importance of water to economic growth, and the fact that it is often overlooked as an infrastructure need. Presenters also discussed other options for funding water infrastructure projects, including public/private partnerships and other private sector capital.

Michael Fallon (USACE) moderated two sessions. The first of these sessions focused on capital planning and life-cycle management. Speakers included Steve Allbee (EPA), Dr. Elliot Ng (USACE), and Ella Mae Herrera (Reclamation). All three discussed the importance of Asset Management, which is the process of evaluating all of an agency's asset's (infrastructure in this case) holistically, with the intent of using a risk-based, cost-benefit consistent scoring approach to determine where to invest resources. The second session focused on the importance of collaboration in order to successfully implement projects, and featured presenters from three localities that had successfully overcome significant hurdles to plan, fund, and implement their infrastructure projects.

WestFAST Liaison Transition

Salt Lake City, UT—November 2010

In November 2010, the WestFAST Federal Liaison transitioned from Jonne Hower (Reclamation) to Dwane Young (US EPA). Jonne had successfully completed her two-year assignment as the liaison. Expressions of gratitude for her dedicated service were expressed by both the WestFAST team and the WSWC. Serving as the first liaison, Jonne helped establish the role of the liaison in the WSWC and helped form WestFAST into a collaborative team.

Dwane Young is a native to Utah. He led the EPA's effort to develop the Water Quality Exchange (WQX) and the Assessment Database. He also has served as a branch chief in EPA overseeing the development of EPA's RCRAInfo database. He has a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from Utah State University.

2010 Workplan Accomplishments

December 2010

With 2010 coming to a close, it's time to look back on all the work that WestFAST accomplished. Below are just a few of the highlights:

- WestFAST initiated work on nearly one-third of the 42 objectives listed in the *Next Steps* report
- WestFAST membership increased from 9 to 11 federal agencies.
- WestFAST effectively delivered Federal agency perspectives to the Council and engaged in substantive discussions on issues such as the proposed revisions of Principles and Guidelines, climate change adaptive management strategies, and agency budgets and appropriations
- WestFAST agencies increased interagency involvement in River Basin studies, the National Interagency Drought Information System, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and a national initiative on integrated water management
- WestFAST partnered with the Council to present the first of a series of biennial Symposia focused on Prioritizing and Financing Infrastructure

Agency Announcements

August 2010: US Army Corps of Engineers released a report titled 'National Report: Responding to National Water Resources Challenges.' Available at: http://www.building-collaboration-for-water.org/Documents/nationalreport_final.pdf

November 27, 2010: The Congressional Research Service published a report titled: Energy's Water Demand: Trends, Vulnerabilities, and Management. Available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41507.pdf>

December 2010: EPA hosted a delegation from Australia to discuss water issues. In attendance were several principles from WestFAST agencies. The meeting provided a great opportunity to discuss collaboration opportunities between the WestFAST agencies.

April 2011: NASA will sponsor two workshops on evapotranspiration and drought in Silver Spring, MD. For more information on these workshops visit:

<http://watercycleforum.com/workshops.html>

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- Week of March 7, 2011: WSWC will be in DC for Agency and Congressional meetings.
- March 21-23, 2011: WSWC and CA Department of Water Resources will co-sponsor a state-federal climate workshop in San Diego, CA
- April 5-7, 2011: Evapotranspiration: An Essential Observation for Climate Understanding and Efficient Water Management Workshop, Silver Spring, MD
- April 11-12, 2011: Global Drought Monitoring Workshop, Silver Spring, MD
- April 13-15, 2011: Spring WSWC meeting, Santa Fe, NM
- June 29-July 1, 2011: Summer Western Governors' Association Meeting, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- July 27-29, 2011: Summer WSWC meeting, Oregon
- Fall 2011: Native American Rights Fund (NARF)/WSWC Indian Water Rights Symposium, Location TBD



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