



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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WestFAST News

April 2011

WSWC Holds Spring Meeting

April 13-15—Santa Fe, NM

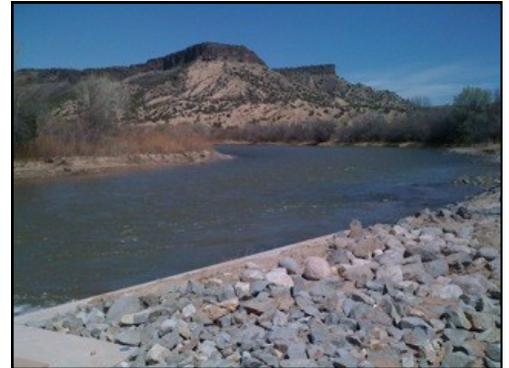
The WSWC held their spring meeting in Santa Fe, NM on April 13-15. At this meeting, the Council adopted two new positions. The first position states the Council's position on the National Levee Safety Act, and urges that water delivery canals not be included in the definition of levees as defined by National Levee Safety Commission. The second position urges Congress and the Administration to provide stable and continuous funding to the State Revolving Funds (both Clean Water and Drinking Water). To see the full text of these positions, see: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/policy.html>.

WSWC Chair Weir Labatt encouraged the Council to consider the development of a 'Shared Vision on Water' that would focus on the value of water and water management, and stress the importance of state, tribal, and local water planning efforts. The Council will be considering how to move forward on this 'Shared Vision' over the next several months.

WestFAST hosted a half-day workshop on water information data exchange. The workshop had speakers from USGS, EPA, NRCS, the State of Kansas, Sandia Lab, University of Texas, and the National Groundwater Association. The focus of the meeting was two-fold: 1) To discuss tools/concepts/methods for implementing the Water Census and to foster discussion among the WSWC on how to best engage with USGS on the Water Census; and 2) To discuss principles and concepts on data exchange to foster discussion among the WSWC on how best to exchange data with one another and with their federal partners.

Mike Fallon (USACE) reported out on WestFAST activities to the Council, including identifying areas of potential collaboration between the WSWC and WestFAST. Reports were also given by each of the states on the water outlook for this year. The La Niña event has set up an interesting dichotomy between very wet states (central and northern Rockies) and very dry states (southwest and Texas).

The next council meeting will be held in Bend, Oregon on July 26-29. For a copy of the presentations given at the Spring WSWC meeting (including presentations from the WestFAST data workshop) see: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/165%20council%20mtg%20-%20apr2011.html>.



Reclamation Releases Secure Water Report to Congress

April 25, 2011

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation released a report evaluating the risks of climate change to water operations, hydropower, flood control, and fish and wildlife in the West. This report to Congress is the first of a series of reports as part of the Secure Water Act (Public Law 111-11), and provides an assessment for each of the major basins defined by the act.

Reclamation performed their assessment via a compilation of Global Climate Change Models downscaled for each of the basins. They found that although there is general consensus among the models regarding an increase in temperature, there is not as much agreement in regards to an increase or decrease in precipitation. They identified numerous challenges that will need to be addressed especially if higher temperatures result in earlier runoff and more precipitation as rain rather than snow.

Results and potential impacts varied by basin, with southern basins expected to become drier and northern basins expected to be wetter. For a full copy of the report as well as the methodology used in the analysis see: <http://www.usbr.gov/climate/>.

USACE and EPA Release Proposed Guidance on CWA Jurisdiction

April, 2011

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA released proposed guidance on determining whether or not a water falls under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act as a 'water of the United States.' This guidance would replace previous guidance that sought to bring clarification to what waters fell under federal jurisdiction following the SWANCC and Rapanos decisions by the Supreme Court.

This draft guidance provides further clarifications on how waters with a 'significant nexus' (a term described by Justice Kennedy in his opinion on the Rapanos case) to navigable or interstate waters would fall under the protection of the CWA. This draft guidance document is intended to describe for agency field staff the agencies' current understandings; it is not a rule, and hence it is not binding and lacks the force of law. Following receiving comments on this draft guidance, USACE and EPA plan to finalize the guidance and undertake a rulemaking process. Comments on the guidance are due by July 1, 2011. For more information see: <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/CWAwaters.cfm>.

NASA Sponsors Meetings on Evapotranspiration and Drought

April, 2011—Silver Spring, MD

NASA hosted two meetings in April with the focus on engaging the scientific and policy making community on ways in which NASA data and capabilities can be used to make better and more informed decisions.

The first meeting was held the week of April 4th and focused on NASA's abilities via remote sensing to better estimate evapotranspiration allowing water managers to get a better sense of water use and water availability. The second meeting was held the week of April 11th and focused on drought, and the NASA tools that are available to help fill the data gaps where in-situ data aren't available. NASA will produce a white paper for each of these meetings identifying next steps and recommendations.

Agency Announcements

February 24, 2011: USGS Releases Report on the Uses of LandSAT, see: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2011/1031/>

March 28, 2011: EPA Releases Strategy to Protect America's Waters, see: <http://blog.epa.gov/waterforum/>

April 4, 2011: NOAA Launches National Climate Assessment Federal Advisory Committee, see: http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2011/20110404_ncaspeech.html

April 14, 2011: USGS/USFWS Release Fish Habitat Map Viewer, see: <http://www.nbii.gov/far/nfhap/>

April 15, 2011: EPA Solicits Public Comment on Permit to Reduce Stormwater Discharges from Construction Sites, see: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/4B7E8CAA1E88548885257873004D1810>

April 22, 2011: NASA Collaborates on Climate Science, see: http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2011/apr/HQ_11-121_Climate_Projects.html

May 6, 2011: WestFAST Posts 2011 Work Plan On-line, see: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/westfast/workplan/index.htm>

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **June 29-July 1, 2011:** Summer Western Governors' Association Meeting, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- **July 27-29, 2011:** Summer WSWC meeting, Bend, Oregon
- **August 23-25, 2011:** Native American Rights Fund (NARF)/WSWC Indian Water Rights Symposium, Billings, MT
- **October 5-7, 2011:** Fall WSWC meeting, Idaho Falls, Idaho



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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