



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 (WGA) in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.

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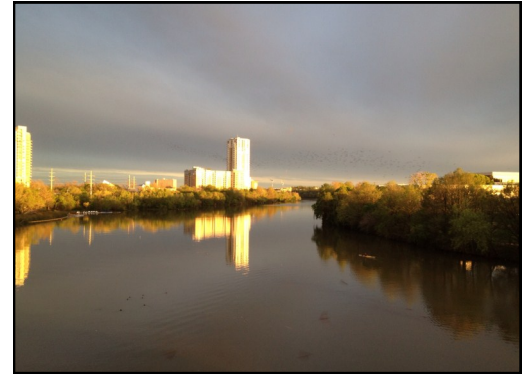
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## WSWC Holds Spring Council Meeting

Washington, DC  
 March 13-16, 2012

In March, the WSWC held a joint meeting with the Interstate Council on Water Policy (ICWP) in Washington, DC. On Tuesday, March 13th, the ICWP hosted a meeting focused on USGS/NOAA/USACE cooperation as a result of the Federal Toolbox/Integrated Water Resources Sciences and Services (IWRSS) Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in 2011.

On Wednesday, March 14th, the ICWP held the Washington Roundtable meeting. This meeting brought together representatives from NOAA, USACE, DOI, EPA, USDA, as well as a congressional panel. This meeting provided an opportunity for the agencies to discuss their priorities for the coming year. Gary Carter (NOAA) discussed IWRSS; Anne Castle (DOI) discussed the 2013 President's Budget; priorities for the USGS, including a study on hydrofracking, continued emphasis on the Water Census, and continued support for the National Stream Information Program (NSIP), with particular focus on being able to respond to emergencies. She also discussed the priorities for Reclamation, placing particular emphasis on the WaterSMART program and the Colorado River Basin Study. Ann Bartuska (USDA) discussed a number of USDA priorities for 2013 including the Forest Service's Watershed Condition Framework, and the importance of Forest Service Lands to drinking water supplies. She also discussed the role of NRCS in preserving watersheds through cooperative investments on private lands. Nancy Stoner (EPA) discussed the gap in infrastructure needs and infrastructure spending. She also discussed a new study that EPA is leading looking at the importance of water to the U.S. She responded to questions on the Clean Water Act Jurisdictional Guidance (Waters of the U.S.), as well as questions on EPA's position on states developing numeric nutrient criteria. Lastly, in response to a question on interbasin transfers, she stated that EPA is not working on any changes to EPA's interbasin transfers rule.



On March 15th, the WSWC held their Spring meeting. During this meeting, the WSWC renewed two positions: [#338](#) Commending the introduction of the Energy Water Integration Act (S. 1343) and [#339](#) Supporting federal research on hydroclimate data collection programs. The WSWC also approved two new positions: [#340](#) Supporting state primacy over groundwater and [#341](#) Addressing proposed changes to Reclamation's policy manual.

During the meeting, there were several WestFAST presentations, including a joint WSWC/WestFAST presentation on the Water Use Data Exchange. Dave Tuthill (Idaho National Laboratory) gave a presentation on future Landsat missions. EPA gave presentations on the CWA Jurisdiction Guidance, the EPA Hydrofracking study, EPA's study looking at the importance of water to the U.S., and the 2013 President's budget for 2013 for EPA.

On Friday, March 16th, the WSWC met with the WestFAST Principals to discuss emerging issues and priorities for the upcoming year. Tony Willardson, the Executive Director for the WSWC, discussed WSWC's plan to release a 2012 Water Report, and that it would focus on 'Managing Uncertainty.' Each of the WestFAST Principals discussed their planned activities and priorities. In concluding the meeting, Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor encouraged the group to continue to develop programs that encourage cooperation between the federal agencies and with the states.

Materials from the WSWC meeting are available at the WSWC [website](#).

## WaterSMART Program Funds Studies of Water Supplies and River Environments in Five Western Water Basins

March 21, 2012

Reclamation is providing \$2.4 million in funding for comprehensive water studies in California, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The funding comes through the Department of the Interior's WaterSMART Basin Study Program. This program provides leadership and tools to states and local communities to address current or projected imbalances between water supply and demand and to work toward sustainable solutions. In addition to the federal funding, \$3.9 million will be provided by non-federal partners for a total of more than \$6.3 million.

The selected projects are the Los Angeles Basin in California; the Pecos River Basin in New Mexico; the Republican River Basin in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska; the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Basins in California and the Upper Washita River Basin in Oklahoma.

Basin studies are comprehensive water studies that define options for meeting future water demands in river basins in the western United States where imbalances in water supply and demand exist or are projected to exist. See the [news release](#) for more information.

## USDA Publishes Final Forest Planning Rule

March 23, 2012

USDA released the final Forest Planning Rule on how planning and management are done on the 193-acre National Forest System. USDA received over 250,000 comments on the proposed rule and the draft environmental impact statement.

The final rule strengthens the role of public involvement and dialogue throughout the planning process. It also requires the use of the best available scientific information to inform decisions.

One key component of the new plan requires the Forest Service to: "maintain or restore watersheds, water resources, water quality including clean drinking water, and the ecological integrity of riparian areas". See the [news release](#) for more information.

## Agency Announcements

**February 28, 2012:** Reclamation Announces Funding for Bay Delta Restoration Program: CALFED Water Use Efficiency Grants, see [news release](#).

**February 29, 2012:** Phosphorous and Groundwater: Scientists Establish Links Between Agricultural Use and Transport to Streams, see [news release](#).

**March 2, 2012:** Urban Waters Federal Partnership Launches Ambassadors Program to Support Revitalizing Urban Waterways in U.S. Communities, see [news release](#).

**March 2, 2012:** Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces New Conservation Reserve Program initiative to Restore Grasslands, Wetlands, and Watersheds, see [news release](#).

**March 7, 2012:** Multi-Agency Satellite Begins Climate and Weather Studies, see [news release](#).

**March 8, 2012:** EPA/WY Release Statement on Pavillion, WY Groundwater Investigation, see [news release](#).

**March 8, 2012:** USGS Technical Announcement: Atrazine Not Likely to Exceed Drinking Water Standard in Agricultural Groundwater, see [news release](#).

**March 19, 2012:** USGS Study—Confidence in Climate Data: Using 3 Million-Year-Old Records, see [news release](#).

**March 19, 2012:** EPA, City Officials Expect New Treatment Plant Permits to Boost Boise River Water Quality, see [news release](#).

**March 30, 2012:** EPA Releases Draft National Water Program 2012 Strategy: Response to Climate Change for Comment. Comments Due by May 17, 2012, see [website](#).

## Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **April 30-May 4, 2012:** [National Monitoring Conference—Water: One Shared Effort—Common Future](#), Portland, Oregon
- **May 15-16:** [Mountain West Water Institute: Waters of the West Workshop](#), Idaho Falls, ID
- **June 6-8, 2012:** [Summer WSWC meeting](#), Seattle, Washington



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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