

WestFAST

Western States Federal Agency Support Team
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2019-2021 Work Plan (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021)

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

- An excerpt from the *Declaration of Cooperation*

1.0 Introduction

The [Western States Federal Agency Support Team](#) (WestFAST) is a collaboration among 12 federal agencies with water resource management responsibilities in the West.

WestFAST was formed in 2008 in response to [Western Governors' Association](#) (WGA) recommendations recorded in their report [Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future: Next Steps Report](#), to support the [Western States Water Council](#) (WSWC) and the WGA through coordination Federal efforts regarding water resources. Specifically, WestFAST's objective is to promote and facilitate coordination among federal agencies, and between the states and federal agencies, to help the WSWC implement collaborative efforts outlined in the *Next Steps Report*.

Though some of the areas that the *Next Steps Report* identified for state-federal collaboration continue to remain relevant and inform WestFAST goal and activity areas, subsequent WGA [Policy Resolutions](#) ([2018-12](#) and [2018-08](#)) define current western states water management priorities and goals, and include opportunities for state-federal collaboration in the areas of infrastructure, innovative water management, and reliable water data. The WSWC's Executive, Legal, Water Resource, and Water Quality Committees have also established work plans defining critical areas of state-federal collaboration toward improving understanding and managing water resources in the west. Additionally, a panel of five federal agency representatives (DOI, EPA, USDA, DOC, USACE) with overlapping responsibilities on federal water programs and policies, which calls itself the "Water Policy Committee" (aka Water Subcabinet), have defined priority mission areas, including drought resilience and supply; quality and nutrient management; infrastructure finance; data, model, forecasting; and flood control, which will further inform and shape WestFAST priorities.

This 2019-2021 work plan defines WestFAST priority goals and activities toward meeting the team's defined objectives. The work plan is presumed to be a living document that can be altered during the 2-year plan period to reflect changes in western states and participating WestFAST agencies programs and needs.

1.2 Future Efforts:

WestFAST's future efforts will continue to be supportive of collaborative opportunities outlined in the latest WGA resolutions, WSWC committee work plans; and will also bridge efforts, intersecting them with the Water Policy Committee's five mission areas – Drought, Resilience, & Supply; Quality & Nutrient Management; Infrastructure Finance; Data, Modeling, & Forecasting; and Flood Control.

2.0 Coordination and Collaboration

2.1 Interagency

The WestFAST federal member agencies all have unique roles within western water management. WestFAST provides a means for member agencies to collaborate in three key areas, including:

- Information sharing
- Participation in cross-agency workgroups, and
- Outreach

2.1.1 Information Sharing

All WestFAST agencies have many high-priority initiatives that can benefit from coordination with other federal agencies. WestFAST provides a forum for these agencies to discuss initiatives and to understand how they can better work together. To further facilitate improved information sharing, WestFAST will:

- Continue monthly conference calls
- Reconstitute a workgroup structure, and will meet, as needed, to accomplish the activities of this work plan. Potential workgroups may include: *Drought/Water Scarcity; Infrastructure; and Data, Modeling, and Forecasting.*
- Continue to support the WestFAST Principals annual meeting to review WestFAST accomplishments and discuss future coordination related to federal water resource programs and policies, to include holding a WestFAST Principals Meeting in the Spring of 2020.
- Produce a monthly newsletter sharing high profile accomplishments, descriptions of new water-related programs and policies, upcoming meetings, and training opportunities.
- Continue hosting regular special topic informational meetings and webinars to promote and facilitate coordination, and improve collaboration and engagement with the WSWC in addressing western water resources challenges. These informational sessions will be on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies, WSWC members, and other water resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders.

- Identify and nominate, as appropriate, additional agencies with water resources responsibilities in the western states to WestFAST as a member agency, e.g. DOE, FEMA, DOJ, RUS
- Explore alternatives to the hiring timeframe and funding mechanism used to support the WestFAST Liaison position.
- Explore recommitting to WestFAST Declaration of Support, including update of the standing agreement, creation of an MOU, or formation under some other structure.

2.1.2 Participation in Cross-Agency Workgroups

WestFAST also collaborates through participation in cross-agency workgroups. Cross-Agency activities the WestFAST plans to engage in during 2019-2021 include:

- Working with states to replicate the successes accomplished in the Southwest Oklahoma Water Action Plan and will choose the next basin or watershed scale pilot projects.
- Coordinating with Federal, State, and other related organizations to work on sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting improvements that will help organizations assess drought conditions and the possible end or onset of drought for more effective responses.
- Facilitating a WestFAST Principals meeting in March/April 2020.
- Engaging and working with the Western Regional Partnership (WRP), which provides a proactive and collaborative framework for senior-policy level Federal, State, and tribal leaders to identify common goals and emerging issues in the Southwestern United States.
- Engaging with Spatial Water Data workgroups and subcommittees, and continuing to engage WSWC member states on how best to share spatial data sets.
- Help connect WestFAST member agencies' political leadership with WSWC member states to facilitate continued collaboration and effective working relationships in western water management.
- Assisting with the broad promotion of the WPC by hosting introductory and other webinars, coordinating and hosting symposia inclusive of WPC's members and mission areas.
- Providing support and broad promotion of the National Water Reuse Action Plan.
- Provide support and broad promotion of National Drought Response Partnership activities.

2.1.3 Outreach

WestFAST works to improve its visibility and availability to assist with highlighting its agencies water activities. This is primarily done via the WestFAST web site (<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/WestFAST.htm>) as well as through a WestFAST newsletter. In addition, WestFAST reaches out to other organizations to inform them on this unique state/federal collaboration. To continue to improve WestFAST visibility, during 2019-2021, WestFAST will engage in the following activities:

- Maintaining and enhancing the WestFAST web site with current WestFAST activities, events, and updates on WestFAST agency programs and collaborative efforts.
- Broadly publishing information about WestFAST informational meetings to federal employees, and the WSWC, as appropriate.
- Continuing the publication and distribution of a monthly WestFAST newsletter to share information.
- Continuing to update its Fact Sheet; and will develop a WestFAST primer to introduce WestFAST to non-member federal agencies, and state and local collaborators.
- Continuing participation in federal water collaborations and State/Federal collaborations. WestFAST will provide support to its member agencies' water initiatives through outreach and facilitating implementation with WSWC member states, as appropriate.
- Continue hosting regular special topic informational meetings and webinars to promote and facilitate coordination, and improve collaboration and engagement with the WSWC in addressing western water resources challenges. These informational sessions will be on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies, WSWC members, and other water resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders.

2.2 State-Federal Partnerships

WestFAST agencies agree with and support the WSWC goal of developing “integrated approaches and greater partnership among state, local, and federal agencies” to find “optimal solutions” to the increasing challenges associated with water management in the west. To facilitate this, WestFAST will:

- Continue working with the Federal Non-Tribal Water Claims Subcommittee to evaluate ways the WSWC and WestFAST can improve the effective resolution of federal non-tribal water rights claims; and will continue to support the WSWC in defining best practices for addressing federal non-tribal federal reserved water rights.
- Continue supporting regular conferences, workshops, and webinars for education and relationship-building opportunities, and to serve as a forum to discuss notable water management developments as they arise.
- Continue providing the WSWC with information on the use of the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R Series and new product development for Landsat and other remote sensing capabilities, including initiatives to map evapotranspiration and consumptive use, indicators of water quality, land subsidence, groundwater change, drought impacts and land following, and snow water resources.
- Continue hosting quarterly listening sessions, using topics of current concern, with WSWC member states to obtain perspectives, identify priority needs, concerns, and ongoing state issues.

3.0 Support the WGA, WSWC, Federal Water Policy Committee (WPC), and the NDRP with implementation of Policy Resolutions, Annual Work Plans, and Mission Areas.

The WestFAST will align work activities, and seek new opportunities to collaborate with the WGA, WSWC members' states, the WPC, and the NDRP in support of recommendations, priority issues, and goals outlined in WGA's Policy Resolutions; the WSWC Committees' Work Plan; and intersecting with the WPC's Mission Areas and evolving objectives.

3.1 Water Resources

- The WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC's efforts to improve preparedness and response to drought, floods, and other extreme events.
- The WestFAST will continue supporting NIDIS and other weather/climate monitoring and adaptation efforts (including RISA's work)
- WestFAST will support the WSWC's efforts on the Water Resources Development Act
- Conservation and Efficiency: share best practices and identify policy options for drought management.
- Working within Institutional Frameworks to Manage Drought: Innovative, flexible policy solutions, such as streamlined processing of temporary water transfers, should be considered when managing drought.

3.2 Water Quality

- The WestFAST will assist with identifying and coordinating with WSWC member states and other technical or national organizations with common interests in the water quality/quantity nexus to co-host educational workshops or symposia on relevant nexus topics, to develop better collaborative relationships and to find additional potential solutions to nexus problems.
- The WestFAST will ensure ongoing coordination and information sharing with regards to federal agencies activities related to the clarification of the Clean Water Act jurisdiction and the WOTUS Rule.
- The WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on activities, ongoing developments, and positions regarding the Water Transfers Rule.
- The WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA's efforts involving nutrients, including Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs/EPA cyanotoxin criteria).
- The WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA's rulemaking efforts related to tribes' ability to obtain "treatment as states" status under the Clean Water Act § 518.
- The WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA's activities involving abandoned hardrock mines and protections for Good Samaritans under the Clean Water Act.

- The WestFAST will coordinate a Clean Water Act/Abandoned Hardrock Mines Federal Programs & Activities update at the 191st WSWC Fall Meeting to be held in Breckenridge, CO, October 18, 2019.
- The WestFAST will assist the WSWC with its efforts to develop and support efforts to clean up abandoned hardrock mines, including the possible development of a work group and/or workshop to bring together interested stakeholders to identify ways to facilitate abandoned hardrock mine remediation.
- The WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on Federal policies, rules, and activities involving hydraulic fracturing.
- Local Watershed Planning: Technical support to states and local watersheds to address local water issues associated with water quality, growth, and land management to complement state water needs.
- Federal Assistance in Meeting Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Standards: Provide support to states and water systems to meet federal requirements, especially for small and rural systems which often lack the resources needed to comply with federal treatment standards.
- SDWA – Support and Technical Assistance: Collaborate with and allow states to identify and establish priority areas, timelines, and focus on programs that provide the largest public health and environmental benefits.
- Water Quality Monitoring and Data Collection - Provide support to states in developing innovative monitoring and assessment methods, including making use of biological assessments, sensors and remote sensing, as well as demonstrating the value to the states of the national probabilistic aquatic resource surveys.

3.3 Infrastructure

- Will co-host, in coordination with WSWC’s Water Resources Committee, two symposia on infrastructure – federal and state programs, needs, and strategies.
- The WestFAST will support the WSWC’s efforts to communicate challenges associated with restrictions/limitations placed on state SRFs; the “right of first refusal” to fund projects by WIFIA, including first round funded projects in WSWC member states; and the need for stable and continuing appropriations to the SRF capitalization grants at funding levels that are adequate to help states address their water infrastructure needs.

3.4 Data, Modeling, & Forecasting

- The WestFAST will continue working with the WSWC member states to gather and disseminate water resources data using WaDE and other resources.
- The WestFAST will partner with the WSWC to facilitate funding to states for water data through the WUDR program.
- The WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC’s efforts communicating the critical need for federal water data related programs, and developing strategies to meet those needs.

- Extreme Weather Events Planning: Improve predictive and adaptive capabilities for extreme weather variability and related impacts. Place a priority on improving the sub-seasonal and seasonal precipitation forecasting capabilities that could support water management decision-making.
- Facilitate a report-out on the Sub-Seasonal Climate Forecasting Rodeo II.
- WestFAST will continue to support and implement the progress made with the collaborative efforts of (FIRO) and replicate successes on the Russian River / Lake Mendocino pilot.

3.5 Flood Control

- The WestFAST will continue to support the WSWC's efforts to improve preparedness and response to drought, floods, and other extreme events.
- The WestFAST will continue supporting NIDIS and other weather/climate monitoring and adaptation efforts (including RISA's work)

3.6 WSWC Executive Committee

The WestFAST will facilitate collaboration between WSWC and the WestFAST, including agency visits, building closer ties with WestFAST principals, facilitating engagement on new and on-going WSWC and federal policy initiatives, assistance with workshops and symposiums, and meeting regularly with WSWC Executive Committee representatives. In support of these efforts, the WestFAST will:

- Meet regularly with WSWC, and continue providing the WSWC with assistance in its efforts to build closer ties with WestFAST principals.
- Assist with and participate in visits with Executive Branch agencies and WestFAST principals.
- Co-host, in coordination with WSWC's Water Resources Committee, two symposia on infrastructure needs, strategies, and federal and state programs.