



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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Dear WestFAST Principals:

On behalf of the Western States Water Council (WSWC), I am writing to express our strong continuing commitment to working together to address the serious water resources challenges facing the West and the Nation. Further, we would like to express our appreciation for the hard work of your representatives and your leadership as a principal participant directing federal efforts as part of what is our unique Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST). It serves as a successful model for greater federal collaboration in support of state priorities related to water resources management.

The Western States was organized in 1965 pursuant to a western governors' resolution calling for regional cooperation to develop a fair appraisal of future water needs, and the most equitable means of meeting such needs, given that "the future growth and prosperity of the western states depend upon the availability of adequate quantities of water of suitable quality." At the time, western states found themselves in an era of rapid federal water resources development, and regional or basinwide planning, without a sufficient voice in the use of state water resources. The WSWC has since provided a unified voice advising western governors on water policy issues. The WSWC is a government entity, an instrumentality of each and every one of our eighteen participating states.

In 2008, at the request of western governors, the Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) was formed to work with the WSWC to foster greater cooperation and improve collaboration between states and federal agencies with water resources research, development, and management responsibilities. The WSWC and WestFAST are unique organizations, serving to coordinate and facilitate efforts to improve western water conservation, development, management, and protection.

Some of our collaborative efforts have involved improving federal and state relationships in general, working with the Western Governors Association, as well as specific efforts focused on:

- Defining Waters of the United States and federal/state jurisdiction;
- Adjudicating federal reserved water rights and quantifying tribal water rights;
- Encouraging and better enabling water conservation and water reuse;
- Preparing for and responding to drought, floods and other extreme events;
- Gathering and making more accessible in situ and remote sensing data on water supplies and uses, consumptive use, evapotranspiration, ground water, precipitation, snowpack, streamflow, water quality, and water transfers;
- Improving sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) weather research, forecasting and innovation;
- Facilitating the transition between federal and state research and federal, state and local water management and project operations – research to operations (R2O);
- Raising the visibility of water infrastructure development, maintenance, repair and rehabilitation needs, including dam and levee safety, and the water and wastewater challenges facing small rural communities;
- Striving to streamline and balance federal and state regulatory requirements; and
- Facilitating greater collaboration at a region and basin scale to support water resources planning and implementation.

Many of these efforts directly support implementation of the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West. The Council also strives to promote and encourage the Congress to support and appropriately fund vital federal water resource projects, programs and initiatives.

Effective collaboration requires a significant commitment of time and resources, which was recognized when those agencies participating in WestFAST signed the original letter of cooperation. Unfortunately, over time, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain and exercise such an interagency agreement, which includes the shared cost of a federal liaison serving a rotating two-year detail in our offices. While we provide office space and clerical support, salary and travel costs have in the past been borne by the participating agencies jointly. Some

agencies have consistently provided their fair share or more of the cost, while others have struggled to contribute for various reasons. We would like to see all the participating agencies renew their commitment to WestFAST, including contributing financially, and ask that as Principals you address this issue and options for providing fair and consistent funding.

We look forward to continuing to vigorously work together to advance our mutual interests, building on our past collaborative efforts, and again express our appreciation for WestFAST, its members, and for your vision and leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Willardson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Tony Willardson
Executive Director