

Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 12 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 issues.



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WestFAST News

December 2013

Western Governors Meet in Vegas

On December 11-12, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) held its 2013 Winter Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. There, the Governors announced eight policy resolutions, including revised and updated versions of their existing water resources and water quality resolutions.

The water resources resolution re-asserts state primacy over water supply planning and management, but also identifies new infrastructure, innovative water management, and reliable water data as further priorities for the Governors. While maintaining longstanding WGA policies, the resolution includes new provisions stating that federal surplus water rulemaking and storage reallocation studies should defer to the states' "...legal right to allocate, develop, use, control, and distribute their waters, including but not limited to state storage and use requirements." The resolution also supports the WSWC's Water Data Exchange (WaDE).

The water quality resolution similarly maintains existing WGA positions. New language underscores the need for states and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work together as co-regulators under the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Safe Drinking Water Act, specifically urging EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that state water managers have a "robust and meaningful voice" in the development of any rule regarding CWA jurisdiction, particularly in the early stages of development. Other new provisions state that CWA jurisdiction does not extend to groundwater, and that federal efforts to study hydraulic fracturing should leverage state expertise and should not diminish state authority over water allocation.

The meeting also included the public rollout of WGA's Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT), an online GIS map of crucial wildlife habitat across 16 western states designed to help energy, transportation, and land use planners. CHAT's completion caps years of effort by the WGA to make "meaningful use" of state-developed wildlife data and analysis on a regional basis.

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell gave a keynote address that discussed Secretarial

Order 3330, which she issued to establish an Interior-wide mitigation strategy focused on encouraging balanced development and landscape-level planning on federal lands. Her comments followed another keynote address from Governor Eruviel Ávila Villegas of the Mexican State of Mexico on ways governors on both sides of the border can work together to strengthen the economies and security of both nations. Three plenary sessions addressed accelerating the adoption of green vehicles, creating a regional transportation vision, and combating western wildfires. For more on the meeting, see [link](#).

USGS Landsat Benefits

On December 2, USGS announced the results of a survey of 11,000 Landsat users regarding how they use the data and the value they receive. The survey found that a diverse group of customers use Landsat data in 38 different primary applications, ranging from environmental sciences to agriculture, planning, administration of natural resources, and humanitarian aid. Three-quarters of respondents said the imagery is "somewhat" or "very important" to their work and that they were "moderately" or "very dependent" on Landsat imagery to do their jobs. Almost two-thirds of users said they would have to discontinue half of their work if new and archived Landsat imagery were unavailable.

Based on the survey results, USGS reports that economists have estimated the direct benefits from Landsat imagery in 2011 to be \$2.19B, including \$1.79B for users in the U.S. and \$400M for international users. See [link](#) for more information.

New Federal Budget

The House passed the Bipartisan Budget Act by a vote of 332 to 94 on December 12. Developed by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), the Chairs of the House and Senate Budget Committees, the bill capped overall discretionary spending at \$1.012T for FY 2014, which began on October 1, and at \$1.014T for FY 2015, representing an increase of about \$45B over last year. The bill also stopped the next round of sequestration cuts, providing about \$63B in "sequester relief" over the next two years. Later, the Senate and the President both approved the proposed budget.

Federal News

12/02: Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program due Jan. 17; see [link](#).

12/02: USACE Participates in the Society of American Military Engineers Small Business Conference; see [link](#).

12/02: Landsat Users Confirm Its Unique Value; see [link](#).

12/03: U.S. Drought Monitor Update for December 3, 2013; see [link](#).

12/03: USDA, EPA Partnership Supports Water Quality Trading To Benefit Environment, Economy; see [link](#).

12/03: EPA Completes Cleanup of Mine Waste in Superior, Montana; see [link](#).

12/03: EPA and DOE Release Annual Fuel Economy Guide with 2014 Models; see [link](#).

12/03: Service Initiates Endangered Species Act Status Review of 11 Tarantula Species; see [link](#).

12/03: Study Evaluates Elevated Nitrate Levels in Carson Valley Groundwater; see [link](#).

12/04: Governor Kitzhaber, Senators Wyden and Merkley, and Commissioner Connor Celebrate Successful Completion of Klamath Task Force and Upper Basin Agreement; see [link](#).

12/05: EPA Releases Updated Sustainability Plan; see [link](#).

12/05: Interior Department Releases Updated Strategic Sustainability Plan; see [link](#).

12/05: Service Issues Revised Proposed Rule Reclassifying the Straight-Horned Markhor Under the Endangered Species Act; see [link](#).

12/06: Interior Department Releases Revised Rule to Ensure Long-term Monitoring and Protection of Eagles While Facilitating Renewable Energy Development; see [link](#).

12/09: NASA-USGS Landsat 8 Satellite Pinpoints Coldest Spots on Earth; see [link](#).

12/09: Bay Delta Conservation Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement Available for Public Comment; see [link](#).

12/09: Interior, Oglala Sioux Tribe Announce First Cooperative Agreement to Facilitate Purchase of Fractionated Land under Cobell Settlement; see [link](#).

12/10: Urban Waters Middle Rio Grande Kick-Off Activities; see [link](#).

12/10: The Coldest Place in the World; see [link](#).

12/10: Secretary Jewell Commends Work of Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform; see [link](#).

12/11: Upper Rio Grande Impact Assessment Reveals Potential Growing Gap in Water Supply and Demand; see [link](#).

12/11: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy Establish New National Agreement for More Controlled Burning; see [link](#).

12/11: Thin Skin Beneath Streams Can Power Large Improvements

in Water Quality; see [link](#).

12/12: Long-term Warming and Environmental Change Trends Persist in the Arctic in 2013; see [link](#).

12/12: Secretary Jewell Meets with Western Governors to Provide Update on Sage Grouse Conservation Planning, Lauds Unprecedented Federal-State Cooperation; see [link](#).

12/13: EPA Seeks Applications for Environmental Justice Projects; see [link](#).

12/17: Lower Rio Grande Basin Study Shows Shortfall in Future Water Supply; see [link](#).

12/18: A Modern Compass Improves Oil Production; see [link](#).

12/18: Interior Announces Funding for New Scientific Studies as Part of President Obama's Climate Action Plan; see [link](#).

12/18: Interior Announces First Purchase Offers to Facilitate Cobell Land Consolidation Efforts; see [link](#).

12/19: NOAA, EPA seek public comment on proposal to disapprove Oregon's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program; see [link](#).

12/20: Endangered Species Act Turns 40 on December 28; see [link](#).

12/24: U.S. Drought Monitor Update for December 24, 2013; see [link](#).

12/27: Water and Wastewater Policy Forum Considers Water Challenges in the U.S. and Abroad; see [link](#).

12/30: Report Finds Decrease in USACE Capital and Raises Concerns about Sustaining Future Water Resources Services; see [link](#).

State News

12/02: Executive Director's Notebook: WGA's New CHAT a Boon to the environment, resource development in the West; see [link](#).

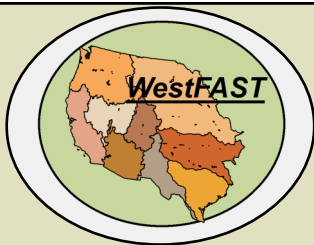
12/10: Follow the Western Governors Winter Meeting in Las Vegas; see [link](#).

12/11: Western Governors Approve Resolutions on Water, Radioactive Waste, Mine Reclamation, Secure Rural Schools; see [link](#).

12/12: Western Governors Roll Out Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool to Ensure Wildlife Values Incorporated into Land Use Decision-making; see [link](#).

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- **January 29 2014:** Webinar on Reclamation's Water Contracting Policy, 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM (MST).
- **April 1-4, 2014:** WSWC Spring Council Meeting and DC Roundtable, Washington DC (Crystal Gateway Marriott).
- **July 14-18, 2014:** WSWC Summer Council Meeting, Helena, Montana (Holiday Inn Downtown).
- **TBD:** WSWC Fall Council Meeting, Arizona.



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