

WestFAST

Western States Federal Agency Support Team
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WestFAST Agencies

Calendar Year 2010 Accomplishments

April 2011

Agencies/Members

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY
ROGER GORKE,
CHAIR

U.S. BUREAU OF
LAND MANAGEMENT
ROBERT BOYD
HEIDI HADLEY

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION
SERVICE
MICHAEL STROBEL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY
CRAIG ZAMUDA

U.S. FOREST SERVICE
JEAN THOMAS
VICE-CHAIR

U.S. BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION
KIRA FINKLER
BECKY FULKERSON

NATIONAL OCEANIC &
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION
ROGER PULWARTY

U.S. GEOLOGICAL
SURVEY
PIXIE HAMILTON

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF
ENGINEERS
MICHAEL FALLON

U.S. FISH &
WILDLIFE SERVICE
DAVID COTTINGHAM

NASA
BRAD DOORN

FEDERAL LIAISON
OFFICER
DWANE YOUNG

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Introduction

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.

In 2010 WestFAST continued to grow as a collaborative organization, and continued to provide federal support to the WSWC. WestFAST focused on several major federal initiatives in 2010, including collaborating on climate change and drought initiatives. This document provides some of the activities that WestFAST performed in 2010 in support of the WSWC and to further cross-agency collaboration.

2010 Highlights

In 2010 WestFAST completed a number of key activities. Some highlights from those activities include:

- **WestFAST Agencies Water Climate Change Program Inventory:** In 2010, WestFAST compiled an inventory of WestFAST agency climate change programs. The purpose of this inventory is to share information on Federal climate change programs that are relevant to western water managers to facilitate closer coordination between Federal agencies and State water scientists and managers. This inventory is available at:
<http://www.westgov.org/wswc/westfast/reports/climateinventory.pdf>
- **Expanded WestFAST Membership from 9 to 11 Agencies:** In 2010 both NASA and DOE joined the WestFAST team. The addition of these two agencies provides additional perspective to WestFAST, and allows WestFAST to better support the WSWC.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** In 2010 WestFAST continued to facilitate interactions between the WestFAST agencies. WestFAST agencies participated in the Climate Change and Water Working Group (CCAWG) as well as in the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS). The USACE through collaborations with WestFAST and WSWC developed a report titled 'Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future.' WestFAST also helped encourage collaboration through the Department of the Interior's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives as well as through Reclamation's Basin Studies. Lastly the USACE helped establish a liaison position with the State of Kansas that will help coordinate federal efforts with state efforts.

- **Supported the Goals of the WSWC Committees:** WestFAST's core mission is to support the efforts of the WSWC, and to bring federal insight and coordination to initiatives identified by the WSWC in their work plan. In 2010, WestFAST continued to provide this key support. Some particular highlights include:
 - Working with the WSWC on NIDIS.
 - Participating in an Ag-to-Urban water transfer work group
 - Working with the WSWC as part of an Ad Hoc Group on the National Water Assessment.
 - NASA provided a special session on remote sensing capabilities to the WSWC.
 - Provided input on non-tribal water rights adjudication.
 - Supported and helped plan WSWC's National Symposium on Water Infrastructure.
 - Worked with the WSWC on estimating water needs for energy production.

- **Supported the Goals in the Next Steps Report:** WestFAST was formed in part as a response to one of the goals put forth as part of the Western Governors' Next Steps Report of 2008. WestFAST has continued to focus on the goals of this report to guide the work that WestFAST performs. In 2010, WestFAST particularly focused on areas of the report related to Climate Change and Drought. Particular efforts in support of the Next Steps Report include:
 - Objective 8c: Continued development of a Federal Toolbox to support state water plans.
 - Objective 20: Worked with the Kansas to develop innovative ways to better collaborate between federal and state agencies at the state level.
 - Objective 32: Participated in NIDIS
 - Objective 33: Developed the WestFAST Agencies Climate Change Program Inventory (mentioned earlier)

WestFAST Membership

In 2010, WestFAST grew from 9 to 11 members with representatives from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) joining the team. The following agencies all contributed to WestFAST's accomplishments in 2010:

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) [newly joined WestFAST in 2010]: The Earth Science Division in NASA's Science Mission Directorate collects global data of the Earth and uses those data to study basic physical and biological processes in the atmosphere, land and oceans. These data and research results have been, and can be, used by resource managers and decision makers to provide information on weather, land use, climate change, evapotranspiration, drought, and other elements that affect water resources.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage the coastal and marine resources of the U.S. Through NOAA's Western Region Regional Collaboration Team (NOAA West) NOAA engages regional partners, stakeholders and customers to foster dialogue regarding products and services required to meet NOAA's mission goals. It is also a goal of the team to facilitate collaboration among NOAA entities and partners in the region to address national and regional priorities. A secondary activity is to keep informed on key associations, councils, workgroups, and meetings and look for opportunities where NOAA could collectively leverage its resources to address problems.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to achieve conservation objectives on private lands that result in public benefits. Conservation objectives for water resources include: improving water quality by reducing sediment and agricultural pollutants; improving riparian areas and wetlands; and improving water use efficiency on irrigated lands. NRCS provides assistance to local communities to address flooding, water storage, and related issues, and provides technical assistance for locally led watershed planning in coordination with Conservation Districts, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils, State agencies, Tribes and other partners. NRCS also provides resource information, such as the Natural Resources Inventory and Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts, to decision-makers and water managers in the west.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): The Directorate of Civil Works is a major component of the USACE. The Civil Works programs include water resource development activities including flood control, navigation, recreation, and infrastructure and environmental stewardship. The Corps plays a key role in western state water plan development, infrastructure planning, project implementation, and environmental protection and restoration.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM): The BLM manages 260 million acres of public land watersheds. BLM leads watershed restoration efforts and is identifying areas where partnerships can leverage funding for work needed on the ground. The BLM is also involved in long-range, water-supply planning, in particular, as it relates to providing information on drought impact assessment in areas where they have ecosystem and recreational management needs. The BLM is also active in resource management issues where there is a sharing of river basin areas and groundwater resources.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation): The Bureau of Reclamation is the nation's largest wholesale water supplier, operating 348 reservoirs with a total storage capacity of 245 million acre-feet of water. Reclamation water supplies serve more than 31 million people and provide 140,000 western farmers with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland. Reclamation is the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the western United States. The agency's mission is to assist in meeting the increasing water demands of the West while protecting the environment and the public's investment in

facilities. Reclamation is committed to working in partnership with states, Tribes, water and power customers, and others to seek creative and collaborative solutions to Western water issues. Reclamation has numerous programs, initiatives and activities that help the Western States, Native American Tribes and others meet new water needs and balance the multitude of competing uses of water in the West.

U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) [newly joined WestFAST in 2010]: DOE's overarching mission is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States; to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission; and to ensure the environmental cleanup of the national nuclear weapons complex. The Department's strategic goals to achieve the mission are designed to deliver results along five strategic themes:

- Energy Security: Promoting America's energy security through reliable, clean, and affordable energy
- Nuclear Security: Ensuring America's nuclear security
- Scientific Discovery and Innovation: Strengthening U.S. scientific discovery, economic competitiveness, and improving quality of life through innovations in science and technology
- Environmental Responsibility: Protecting the environment by providing a responsible resolution to the environmental legacy of nuclear weapons production
- Management Excellence: Enabling the mission through sound management

The continued security and economic health of the United States depends on a sustainable supply of both energy and water. These two critical resources are inextricably and reciprocally linked; the production of energy requires large volumes of water while the treatment and distribution of water is equally dependent upon readily available, low-cost energy. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) projects the U.S. population will grow to 364 million people by the year 2030, increasing electric power demand by 30 percent between 2008 and 2035 putting further demands on water resources (EIA Annual Energy Outlook 2010).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): EPA is one of the primary governmental organizations responsible for protecting human health and natural ecosystems. As such, EPA plays a major role in the regulation, protection and improvement of water resources and supplies of the United States. EPA's Office of Water depends on the ten EPA Regions, other federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian tribes, the regulated community, organized professional and interest groups, land owners and managers, and the public-at-large to accomplish their mission.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): The mission of the USFWS is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. USFWS works to protect and recover threatened and endangered species, restore nationally significant fisheries, and to conserve and restore wildlife habitat such as wetlands. USFWS distributes hundreds of millions of dollars to States, territories and tribes for fish and wildlife

conservation projects. USFWS also manages the 96 million acre National Wildlife Refuge System and operates 70 National Fish Hatcheries which mitigate for fisheries lost as a result of federal water projects and support recreational fisheries.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS): The USFS manages public lands in 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands. The Forest Service is also the largest forestry research organization in the world, and provides technical and financial assistance to state and private forestry agencies. The USFS is dedicated to restore and enhance landscapes, protect and enhance water resources, develop climate change resiliency and help create jobs that will sustain communities

Congress, under Title IV of Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The purpose of the CFLRP is to encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack highlighted the need for pursuing an “all lands approach to forest restoration” and called for close coordination with other landowners to encourage collaborative solutions through landscape-scale operations. The CFLRP provides a means to achieve these aims and to also:

- encourage ecological, economic, and social sustainability;
- leverage local resources with national and private resources;
- facilitate the reduction of wildfire management costs, including through reestablishing natural fire regimes and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire;
- demonstrate the degree to which various ecological restoration techniques achieve ecological and watershed health objectives;
- encourage utilization of forest restoration by-products to offset treatment costs, to benefit local rural economies, to and improve forest health.

To achieve this goal, the Forest Service is directed to restore degraded watersheds by strategically focusing investments in watershed improvement projects and conservation practices at the landscape and watershed scales. The Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) is a comprehensive approach for classifying watershed condition, proactively implementing integrated restoration in selected watersheds on national forests and grasslands, and tracking and monitoring outcome-based program accomplishments for performance accountability.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS): USGS is the Federal Government’s lead agency for providing hydrologic data and information to the Nation. The USGS operates a national network of surface water, ground-water, and water-quality monitoring sites. The USGS also carries out basic research on hydrologic processes, develops new hydrologic measurement techniques and technologies, and conducts a wide range of local, regional, and national hydrologic assessments and investigations. All of this information is collected to nationally consistent standards and made freely available through the USGS National Water Information System (NWIS) and through USGS publications and journal articles. In the Western United States, the USGS operates a

network of 3,600 stream gages, 13,000 ground-water observation wells, and 2,800 ground-water quality monitoring sites. Hydrologic information provided by the USGS is used by a wide range of Federal, State, local, and Tribal water management agencies, consulting firms, the academic community, and the public for hydrologic design and decision making and serves as one of the foundations for the wise use and management of the Nation's water resources.