

WestFAST News



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.

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Editor's note: In regards to the Spring WSWC meeting, in the event of a federal government shut-down, neither WestFAST nor the federal agencies will be participating in the meeting. However, the Council will still meet as planned, just without federal participation.

WSWC Travels to DC for Meetings with WestFAST Agencies and Congressional Representatives

March 6, 2011

The week of March 6th, the WSWC visited Washington, DC for the purpose of coordinating with the federal agencies that make up WestFAST as well as to meet with a number of Congressional staffers to inform them of WSWC positions. The Council was joined by representatives from the Western Governors' Association, as well as representatives from the Native American Rights Fund (NARF).

WSWC met with senior representatives from all of the WestFAST agencies. In all of the meetings, WSWC expressed gratitude for WestFAST and the commitment that these agencies have made to collaborating with the Council and the western states. Some major themes that emerged from the week included: 1) Finding ways to work with the federal agencies on the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs); 2) Developing and communicating a 'Shared Water Vision'; 3) Finding better ways to collaborate on Endangered Species Issues; 4) Demonstrating the value of water, including the importance of water to energy generation and development; 5) The importance of federal data collection efforts, especially USGS's National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP), NRCS's SNOTEL program, the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), and the LandSAT program; 6) Areas of interagency collaboration on water quality and watershed management; and 7) an overall appreciation for the Department of the Interior's leadership in resolving several tribal water rights settlements.

The WestFAST team also took the opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss plans for 2011 and to identify ways to encourage more collaboration between the federal agencies.



Preparing for WSWC Spring Meeting

Coming up April 13-15

The WSWC and WestFAST are ramping up for the Spring Council meeting to be held in Santa Fe, NM April 13-15.

WestFAST will be hosting a 1/2-day session on April 13th focused on water information data exchange, and will feature speakers from USGS, EPA, NRCS, University of Texas, National Groundwater Association, the Sandia Lab, and the State of Kansas. The purpose of this session is to discuss the implementation of the Water Census, and to explore options for how to improve data sharing of water availability and water use data.

The Council Committee meetings (Water Quality, Water Resources, Legal, and Executive) will be held on April 14th. Some items that they plan on discussing are: EPA's general pesticide permit, nutrient water quality standards, the water/energy nexus, the Corps' state water planning reports, the National Levee Policy, Indian water rights issues, and non-tribal water rights.

The full council meeting will be held on April 15th. Along with reports from each of the committees, WestFAST Chair Roger Gorke will present on the activities that WestFAST has undertaken since the last Council meeting as well as share some of WestFAST's plans for this year. More information on the spring meeting, including the most current agendas are available at: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/meetings.html>.

Governors Call for Large Scale Forest Restoration, Realigning Federal Funding

March 1, 2011

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) adopted a new policy that calls on forest managers to focus efforts on restoring forests. The policy states: "Millions of acres of dead trees and a tripling of insect and disease mortality along with scorched watersheds, and stagnant, overgrown forests are but a few of the symptoms of the widespread forest health problem in the Western United States, especially on federal lands."

The policy encourages the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to work with the WGA to develop collaboration plans for large-scale forest restoration. The policy also states WGA's willingness to work with federal partners to engage local and tribal governments as well as private landowners to find synergies for forest restoration.

The WGA news release and full policy are available at: <http://www.westgov.org/component/content/article/241-news-2011/337-large-scale-forest-restoration>

EPA Proposes Rule to Control Mercury and other Toxic Air Emissions from Power Plants

March 16, 2011

The US EPA announced a proposal to reduce emissions from electric power plants. According to EPA, these power plants are the largest source of mercury emissions to the air. Mercury accumulates in lakes, rivers, and fish tissue as methyl-mercury. Fish Consumption Advisories exist in several states as a result of mercury contamination and is the 8th largest cause of impairment in rivers in the U.S. and the #1 cause of impairment in lakes.

For more information on this proposed rule see: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/powerplanttoxics/>

Agency Announcements

March 3, 2011: EPA updates Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule List (under the Safe Drinking Water Act), see: <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/rulesregs/sdwa/ucmr/ucmr3/index.cfm>

March 8, 2011: BLM announces 2011 priority renewable energy projects, see: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/2011/march/NR_03_08_2011.html

March 28, 2011: EPA proposes rule for cooling water intake structures for power generating, manufacturing, and industrial facilities, see: <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/cwa/316b/>

March 28, 2011: USGS releases report on nutrient concentrations, loads, and yields in streams in California, see: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2010/5228/>

March 31, 2011: Reclamation completes successful run of the Yuma Desalting Plant, see: <http://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=35743>

April 1, 2011: Reclamation releases report titled "Hydropower Resource Assessment at Existing Facilities", see: <http://www.usbr.gov/power/>

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **April 11-12, 2011*:** NASA will host: Global Drought Monitoring Workshop, Silver Spring, MD
- **April 13-15, 2011:** Spring WSWC meeting, Santa Fe, NM
- **June 29-July 1, 2011:** Summer Western Governors' Association Meeting, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- **July 27-29, 2011:** Summer WSWC meeting, Bend, Oregon
- **August 23-25, 2011:** Native American Rights Fund (NARF)/WSWC Indian Water Rights Symposium, Billings, MT

*in the event of a government shut-down, the NASA meeting will be canceled.



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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Check out the WestFAST Web Site: <http://www.westgov.org/wswc/WestFAST.htm>