

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 (WGA) in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.

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WSWC Holds Fall Meeting

Idaho Falls, ID—October 5-7, 2011

The WSWC held their fall meeting in Idaho Falls October 5-7. During the meeting the Council readopted three positions. The first position (#335) sets forth recommendations regarding the federal government's role in expediting general stream adjudications; the second position (#336) expresses the WSWC's continued support of the negotiated resolution of Indian reserved water rights claims; and the third position (#337) calls for any federal groundwater strategy to recognize state primacy, reflect a true state-federal partnership, and provide adequate funding consistent with federal requirements.

The Council also continued their discussion about a Shared Water Vision (see [July WestFAST News](#)). The WSWC adopted a vision on water that stresses the importance of water to the west, water's critical role in economic development, and ecological sustainability, and the importance of collaborative, cooperative efforts to meet future needs. The Vision also stresses the importance of state primacy in water planning, policy, and management; that water should be given a 'high public policy priority'; the importance of collaboration and cooperation; and the importance of managing water resources to promote economic growth, which is 'enhanced by the protection and restoration of significant aquatic ecosystems.' The WSWC will have further discussions on the Vision at the Spring WSWC in March 2012.

Several federal representatives also provided presentations at the WSWC meeting. Of particular note, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Reclamation Kira Finkler presented on Reclamation's river restoration, scientific integrity, and WaterSMART efforts. Marlene Finley, Deputy Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service's Intermountain Region addressed water issues related to forests in the west, including watershed restoration and protection, as well as identifying ways to address bark beetle impacts. USGS's Molly Maupin and Bret Bruce both discussed the Water Census and

the Colorado River Basin Focus Area Study.

In the Water Quality Committee meeting, Jean Thomas (USFS) discussed the Forest Service's Watershed Condition Framework (see [August WestFAST News](#)) as well as the USFS's plan to finalize the Forest Planning Rule. Representatives for EPA Region 10 (Pacific Northwest Region) discussed water quality issues in the Region, including a discussion on nutrients as well as a discussion on forest roads. Julie Hewitt from EPA Headquarters provided a briefing on EPA's 316(b) Cooling Water Intake Rule that is currently under development.

Click [here](#) for all the meeting presentations.

Interior Report Assesses Scientific Water-Monitoring and Modeling Systems and Calls for Modernization to Help Sustain Water Supplies

October 3, 2011

The U.S. Department of the Interior released a report titled [Strengthening the Scientific Understanding of Climate Change Impacts on Freshwater Resources of the United States](#). The report was prepared by a federal interagency panel led by Interior's U.S. Geological Survey and developed in concert with the Council on Environmental Quality, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The report provides suggestions about ways to modernize data systems, management, modeling and water measurement tools and highlights the need to coordinate data among agencies. Programs highlighted for modernization include: the National Streamflow Information Program, the National Groundwater Monitoring Network, and implementation of the National Water-Quality Monitoring Network. See the [news release](#) for more information.

EPA Announces Schedule to Develop Natural Gas Wastewater Standards

October 20, 2011

Under Section 304(m) of the Clean Water Act, EPA is planning to develop standards for the disposal of wastewater from natural gas exploration activities from shale and coalbed formations where the wastewater is disposed of through wastewater treatment plants and discharged to surface water.

Wastewater from shale gas development is currently prohibited from being discharged directly to surface water, and although most is reused or re-injected, some is sent to wastewater treatment plants that may not be properly equipped to treat the water prior to discharge. Wastewater from coalbed methane development is currently regulated by the states. EPA will seek to apply more uniform standards for coalbed wastewater treatment and discharge. See the [news release](#) for more information.

NASA Holds Meeting on Remote Sensing of Evapotranspiration Applications in the Western U.S.

Boise, ID—October 12-13, 2011

NASA working with the Western States Water Council, NOAA, USDA, USGS and several groups from Idaho and Nevada sponsored on Oct. 12 and 13 in Boise, Idaho the “Western States Remote Sensing of Evapotranspiration Workshop” (<http://www.westernstatesetorkshop.com>).

The primary objective of the workshop was to demonstrate current evapotranspiration (ET) remote sensing capabilities in Idaho, Nevada and other locations to western states resource managers to potentially improve their efficiency and costs. The amount of ET to the atmosphere for many western states can be over 90% of the water loss and can critically affect local economies tied to agriculture, recreation, hydroelectric power, etc.. Several state of the art presentations were given on the remote sensing of ET. The workshop is a path forward for applying remote sensing of ET to your applications. Approximately 85 people attended the workshop.

Agency Announcements

October 5, 2011: Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Funding to Create Jobs and Improve Rural Water Systems, see [news release](#).

October 7, 2011: Universities of Massachusetts, Hawaii, and Oklahoma Complete Interior’s Nationwide Climate Science Center Network, see [news release](#).

October 11, 2011: America’s Great Outdoors Progress Report Shows Conservation, Recreation Gains, and Economic Benefit, see [news release](#).

October 14, 2011: Central Valley Project (CA) Begins Water Year with 9.3 Million Acre-Feet of Storage (78% of Capacity), see [news release](#).

October 17, 2011: New Regional Climate Science Collaborations Announced in Alaska, California/Nevada, and the Carolinas. see [news release](#).

October 24, 2011: USGS Releases Report on increased CO₂ Impacts on Floods, see [news release](#).

October 25, 2011: EPA Releases Primer on the Uses of Biological Assessment Data and Information, see [news release](#).

October 27, 2011: Interior Releases Updated Roadmap for Solar Energy Development, see [news release](#).

October 28, 2011: NASA and NOAA Launch National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System Preparatory Project (NPP), see NASA [news release](#) and NOAA [news release](#).

October 28, 2011: EPA Develops New Planning Approach to Improve Water Quality in U.S. Cities, see [news release](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **December 12-13, 2011:** WGA/WSWC Innovative Water Transfers Workshop, Las Vegas, NV
- **March 14-16, 2012:** Spring WSWC meeting, Washington, DC
- **April 30-May 4, 2012:** [National Monitoring Conference—Water: One Shared Effort—Common Future](#), Portland, Oregon



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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