



The 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 resources.

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New Water Quality Portal Provides Access to Over 150 Million Water Quality Monitoring Records

April 30, 2012

At the National Water Quality Monitoring Conference in Portland, OR, USGS and EPA announced the release of the water quality portal (www.waterqualitydata.us). The portal provides access to data contained in the [USGS National Water Information System](#) (NWIS) and the [EPA Storage and Retrieval](#) (STORET) system. The water quality monitoring data available in the portal represent data collected by states, tribes, volunteer monitoring groups, USGS, and EPA, as well as a number of other federal agencies that have made their data available via STORET.

"As we constantly look for ways to break down the artificial barriers between government agencies that make it harder to accomplish important work, the launch of the Water Quality Portal is yet another step in the right direction," said USGS Director Marcia McNutt. "For decades both USGS and EPA have been collecting water quality data for different purposes and different missions, but today all data is accessible in one place with a few mouse clicks."

The portal provides a single, user-friendly web interface showing where water quality information has been and is actively being collected. Data can be retrieved in a common format with common terminologies. Output formats include comma-separated, tab-separated, MS Excel, Keyhole Markup Language (KML), and Extensible Markup Language (XML).

The portal utilizes the common nomenclature known as the Water Quality Exchange (WQX—www.epa.gov/storet/wqx/). The nomenclature was developed in coordination between the USGS and EPA as well as



state and tribal partners. It represents the core set of data elements necessary to describe water quality monitoring data, and is used not only for the portal, but also for the transfer of data between state and tribal partners and EPA.

The concept of a common portal was initiated in 2003 in a signed Memorandum of Understanding between USGS and EPA. In 2006, EPA released the Water Quality Exchange which provided a common target for EPA and USGS to work toward. WQX was designed around a set of approved data elements that were developed by the National Water Quality Monitoring Council.

USGS then developed a series of common web services that could be adopted by both USGS and EPA. This new technology allowed USGS and EPA to maintain the data in their own respective databases, while making the data available via common methods and via a common format. This allows a

user of the portal to gain access to the data from both systems without having to consider which database the data are coming from, nor have to go through the process of transforming the data into a common format.

Future enhancements to the portal include the development of the Portal's interface, web services, and compatibility with popular mapping tools.

For more information, see the [press release](#).

NOAA/WGA Hold Joint Climate Forum

Seattle, WA
April 3-4, 2012

On April 3rd and 4th, NOAA hosted a joint climate forum with the Western Governors' Association. The focus of the meeting was to discuss how NOAA and the Pacific-Northwest states could work together to provide better prediction and communication surrounding extreme events (whether that be flooding, drought, atmospheric rivers, sea level rise, extreme storms, etc.). This was the first of what will be a series of forums hosted by NOAA and WGA in support of the MOU signed between the WGA and NOAA around providing better predictive capabilities for climate and extreme events.

In his closing of the meeting, Ted Sturdevant (Director, WA Department of Ecology) summarized with some specific next steps and considerations: 1) how do we become more resilient to climate change, 2) how do we manage uncertainty, 3) we need clear and relevant science communicated well, 4) we need honest, clear-headed policy decisions, 5) we need knowledge-action networks, 6) we need to practice our coordination and responses to emergency events, and 7) we need to share data.

The MOU was signed at the WGA annual meeting in June 2011 at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. For a copy of the MOU see: http://www.westgov.org/component/joomdoc/doc_download/1450-wga-noaa-mou2011.

EPA Publishes *Principles for an Energy Water Future Document*

April 24, 2012

EPA released an online document that lists [six principles](#) to help guide toward a more sustainable energy and water future. The principles include:

- 1) Efficiency in the use of energy and water should form the foundation of how we develop, distribute, recover, and use energy and water.
- 2) The exploration, production, transmission and use of energy should have the smallest impact on water resources as possible, in terms of water quality and water quantity.
- 3) The pumping, treating, distribution, use, collection, re-use and ultimate disposal of water should have the smallest impact on energy resources as possible.

- 4) Wastewater treatment facilities, which treat human and animal waste, should be viewed as renewable resource recovery facilities that produce clean water, recover energy and generate nutrients.
- 5) The water and energy sectors—governments, utilities, manufactures, and consumers should move toward integrated energy and water management from source, production and generation to end user.
- 6) Maximize comprehensive, societal benefits.

DOD Joins WestFAST

April 12, 2012

The U.S. Department of Defense (representing DoD facilities) became the 12th agency to join WestFAST. Steven Arenson (with the Air Force Western Regional Environmental Office) will be their representative to WestFAST.

Agency Announcements

April 5, 2012: USGS Report: Sediment Chemicals in Coastal Rivers Overall Lower in U.S. than Worldwide Averages, see [news release](#).

April 6, 2012: USDA to Fund New Projects to Reduce Flooding and Enhance Wildlife Habitat, see [news release](#).

April 6, 2012: U.S. Forest Service Targets \$40.6 M to Purchase and Restore Lands in 15 States, see [news release](#).

April 13, 2012: BLM Announces Landscape Approach for Public Lands Management, see [news release](#).

April 17, 2012: DOE Report Finds Major Potential to Increase Clean Hyrdoelectric Power, see [news release](#).

April 23, 2012: NRCS Partnership Projects to Improve 16,500 Acres of Wetlands in 12 States, see [news release](#).

May 1, 2012: NOAA Launches Weather-Ready Nation Pilot Project in Tampa, FL, see [news release](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **May 15-16:** [Mountain West Water Institute: Waters of the West Workshop](#), Idaho Falls, ID
- **May 21-24:** [Western Snow Conference](#), Anchorage, AK
- **June 6-8, 2012:** [Summer WSWC meeting](#), Seattle, Washington



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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