



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION DOI/NDRP/NIDIS

On June 5, the Department of the Interior (DOI) announced that Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Dr. Tim Petty is the new co-chair of the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP). Petty succeeds Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistant Administrator for Water David Ross, and will serve alongside U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey.

The NDRP is an inter-agency task force that enhances drought resilience coordination. It leverages existing federal investments in the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), the National Soil Moisture Network, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)/USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service partnership to improve agricultural water efficiencies and links water data to critical industry sectors. The NDRP is directed to focus efforts to achieve drought resilience through: (1) data collection and integration; (2) communicating drought risk to critical infrastructure; (3) drought planning and capacity building; (4) coordination of federal drought activity; (5) market-based approaches to infrastructure and efficiency; and (6) innovative water use efficiency and technology. The aim is to support state, tribal and local efforts to build long-term resilience to drought.

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere Tim Gallaudet said: “[The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)] is looking forward to Dr. Petty’s leadership. He’s been a key partner in NOAA’s work implementing the Presidential Memorandum on Promoting the Reliable Supply and Delivery of Water in the West [and] has been especially supportive of NOAA’s role in advancing water prediction through improvements to our National Water Model.”

ADMINISTRATION/WATER QUALITY EPA/Perchlorate

On June 18, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it is withdrawing the 2011 regulatory determination regarding perchlorate and making a final determination to not issue a national

regulation. EPA said the decision was made following a review of actions taken by the agency, states and public water systems, including: (1) adoption of drinking water regulations for perchlorate in California and Massachusetts; (2) federal and state remediation activities, particularly in groundwater adjacent to the Colorado River in Nevada; and (3) improved procedures for storing and handling hypochlorite as a drinking water disinfectant, of which perchlorate is a byproduct. Additionally, a new health impact analysis performed by EPA at the recommendation of the Science Advisory Board showed that concentrations at which perchlorate becomes a health concern are higher than considered in the 2011 regulatory determination. EPA noted that the updated occurrence information and the new health impact analysis are the best available information, and support the finding that a national regulation will not significantly protect the public health of Americans more than current actions do.

EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said: “State and local water systems are effectively and efficiently managing levels of perchlorate. Our state partners deserve credit for their leadership on protecting public health in their communities, not unnecessary federal intervention.”

EPA/Water Data

On June 18, the EPA announced a new water data transparency tool called “How’s My Waterway.” The tool provides information to the general public about water quality at the community, state, and national levels. The information is based on data that states, tribes, local agencies and others have provided to EPA, and includes a data page that lists the sources of data displayed.

The community tab offers information about the health of local waters at the watershed scale. It provides details about impaired waters and what is being done to restore or protect the waters, based on the reports States provide to EPA every two years under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Under the state tab, the water quality overview provides “basic facts about a state’s waters (by the numbers), a paragraph about the state’s water quality program, a state-wide survey of overall water quality where available, state drinking water metrics, and summaries of specific water assessments for the state.

Links are included to state websites containing more detail on water quality conditions.” The national tab provides more general information about the condition of water resources (lakes, rivers and streams, wetlands and coastal areas), as well as the quality and metrics of drinking water. See <https://mywaterway.epa.gov>.

ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES **Bureau of Reclamation/Utah**

On June 16, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) exercised new authority provided under the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9) to transfer ownership of two federal water projects in Utah to local water user organizations. The Emery County Project in east-central Utah and the Uintah Basin Replacement Project (also known as Big Sand Wash) in northeastern Utah will be the first water facilities to be transferred. The projects primarily serve irrigation needs, but also provide water for recreation, fish and wildlife, and municipal and industrial needs.

U.S. Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt said: “These title transfers fulfill the Trump Administration’s goals to streamline bureaucratic processes, empower local ownership and facilitate infrastructure investment and job growth. Transferring some facilities into local ownership is also a win for the federal government, which will save taxpayer dollars due to decreased operating costs and reduced liability.”

USBR Commissioner Brenda Burman said: “We are proud to transfer title to our local partners who have been managing and operating these facilities for many years. These projects are the first to reach this stage of completion and highlight our commitment to empowering local management of water resources.”

Congressman Rob Bishop said: “These two conveyances, historic as being the first under authority granted by huge bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate, are no-brainers. Until Congress passed the lands package early last year, these straightforward transfers would literally take an act of Congress. It was time consuming and unnecessary. The Big Sand Wash (Moon Lake) and Emery County Project title transfers will remove federal costs and liability, increase local control, improve stewardship, and reduce an already overburdened federal estate. I commend the Department of the Interior for their expeditious use of this authority. These are big wins for Utah and set a pattern for similar projects across the nation.”

The actions taken initiated a 90-day congressional review, after which USBR will complete the ownership transfer unless Congress passes a joint resolution of disapproval.

Bureau of Reclamation/WaterSMART

The USBR is launching the 2021 WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grant funding opportunity to support water management organizations developing projects that result in quantifiable and sustained water savings, increase the production of hydropower and benefit broader water reliability. USBR is also extending the deadline for the 2021 Drought Resiliency Projects funding opportunity and raising the maximum federal award available through the program. Eligible applicants for funding include states, tribes, irrigation districts, water districts, or other organizations with water or power delivery authority located in the 17 Western United States and Hawaii.

The Water and Energy Efficiency Grants program provides up to \$500,000 per agreement for projects that can be completed in two years and up to \$2M per agreement for projects that can be completed in three years. Recipients must match the funding with a minimum 50% cost-share. Applications are due by September 17. See www.grants.gov, funding opportunity number BOR-DO-21-F001.

The Drought Resiliency Projects funding has been increased up to \$500,000 for projects that can be completed in two years and up to \$1.5M for projects that can be completed in three years. The extended application deadline is August 5. See www.grants.gov, funding opportunity number BOR-DO-20-F002.

MEETINGS

Western States Water Council - Summer Meetings

Due to COVID-19, the WSWC Summer (193rd) Meetings will be held virtually on July 22. Please note that the WSWC committee meetings will be on an abbreviated schedule. The Executive Committee will meet virtually separately prior to the meeting to address sunseting resolutions, the FY2021 budget and other matters - then report to the Full Council. While the Council meetings are being held virtually, you must register in advance to join the meetings via webinar. For further information as it becomes available, see: <https://www.westernstateswater.org/events/wswc-summer-2020-193rd-meetings/>.

Schedule of Meetings

Wednesday, July 22 (Mountain Daylight Times)

- 9:00 am Water Resources Committee
- 11:00 am Water Quality Committee
- 1:15 pm Legal Committee
- 3:15 pm WSWC Full Council Meeting

The decision has been made to also hold the Fall meetings virtually, given continuing uncertainty related to the pandemic and state travel and meeting restrictions.

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is an organization of representatives appointed by the Governors of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.