

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
WORK PLAN
2021/2022**

1. WGA/WSWC COORDINATION and COLLABORATION

Work to date: The Western Governors’ Association (WGA) has adopted two comprehensive policy statements, one focused on water quantity, Water Resource Management in the West (2018-08) and the other on water quality, Water Quality in the West (2018-12), as well as other policy statements with water-related implications.

The Council has worked closely with WGA on various regulatory and other issues, especially the EPA’s proposed and final rules related to Clean Water Act (CWA) jurisdiction and the definition of Waters of the United States, as well as the CWA 401 State Water Quality Certification.

WGA has deferred to the Council to take the lead on some issues, such as tribal water rights settlements.

2021/22: The Council and the Committee will continue to coordinate and consult with the WGA on matters that come before the Council and assist as requested in the development and implementation of WGA water-related policies. WGA staff are invited to attend and participate in our meetings, workshops and symposia. WGA and WSWC staff collaborate on a continuing basis.

As in the past, the Council may propose policy resolutions for WGA consideration. Further, the WSWC Chair and/or Executive Director will participate in WGA meetings as appropriate. Working with the WGA, the Council will also coordinate Western Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) activities and needs. WGA and WSWC will also work together as part of the Western Policy Network.

Subcommittee: Management Subcommittee

Time Frame: ongoing

2. WESTFAST

Work to date: WestFAST’s creation in 2008 has had many benefits. It is a unique forum for addressing western (and national) water issues that has brought together over a dozen federal agencies to collaborate with each other and state agencies with water-related responsibilities. WestFAST addresses issues raised with the Council and WGA (which in turn support development and implementation of related federal policies and programs). WestFAST and the Council have also discussed collaborative federalism principles to guide federal/state working relationships.

2021/22: The Executive Committee will continue to oversee the Council’s work with WestFAST. Further, the Committee will work to ensure participating agencies realize the real

and potential benefits of WestFAST, helping to build a sound foundation for continuing collaboration. The WSWC will meet regularly with WestFAST representatives and will continue building and maintaining closer ties with WestFAST principals. The Council will also advocate for continued WestFAST funding.

Time Frame: Ongoing

3. FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION and CONGRESSIONAL VISITS/CONTACTS

Work to date: In an ongoing effort to promote WSWC and WGA positions and priorities, Council officers, members and staff often travel to Washington, D.C. to visit with Administration officials and Congressional members and staff. WSWC members and staff have also previously hosted or presented at briefings for congressional staff on the importance of federal data gathering activities, including Landsat thermal data, U.S. Geological Survey streamgaging programs, USDA's National Weather and Climate Center and its snow survey activities, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration programs (including the National Integrated Drought Information System and improving subseasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting), as well as Indian water rights settlements. Some of the feedback from these meetings has suggested a need for greater contact and communication between the Council and federal and congressional policymakers.

Of note, the Council is often invited to testify on proposed legislation. Further, the Council also distributes policy positions adopted at its meetings to House and Senate members of western state delegations, key Congressional leadership and staff, and senior Administration officials. Due to the Corona-19 pandemic and related restrictions on travel and meetings, the Council cancelled its Spring 2020 meetings in the Washington, D. C. area, but followed up with a number of virtual webinars with Administration officials. Following the elections, members and staff met virtually with a leader of the Biden transition team for the Department of the Interior.

2021/22: The Council will continue to communicate our positions with the new Administration and the Congress. Future meetings when appropriate will be scheduled with Administration and Congressional contacts and advise them on major national water issues from the perspective of western states. The WestFAST Liaison Officer and WestFAST members will assist with and participate in visits with Executive Branch agencies. The WSWC will meet with WestFAST principals. Other trips and visits may be made as needed. The Council staff and members will also communicate our external positions as the need arises and continue to respond to requests for testimony, briefings and information from the Congress and the Administration.

Subcommittee: Management Subcommittee

Time frame: Ongoing

4. REGULAR COUNCIL MEETINGS

Work to date: The first meeting of the Council was held in Stateline, Nevada in 1965, and regular meetings have been held since. Currently, the Council meets three times per year,

rotating among the member states, which host the meetings at a location of their choice. Given the current pandemic, meetings have been held virtually. One benefit has been expanded participation and reduced meeting and travel costs. Guest speakers and topics for discussion are scheduled according to members' interests and needs. External policy positions for consideration are noticed 30-days before the Council meets and are distributed not only to members, but also to WGA staff and the governors' staff. Any position statement not noticed may be brought before the Council for consideration at a meeting by unanimous consent, but if approved, must be sent to WGA for review prior to distribution consistent with mutually agreed upon WGA and WSWC procedures for policy coordination.

2021/22: The Summer 2021 meetings are scheduled to be held in Cody, Wyoming. The Fall 2021 meetings are scheduled to be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

5. NEWSLETTER

Work to date: *Western States Water* provides members and others with accurate and timely information on various water resources topics, activities and events at state, regional and national levels. It is provided as a free service to members, governors and their staff, member state water resource agencies, state water users associations, selected multi-state organizations, key congressmen and their staffs, and top federal administration officials. Other public and private agencies and individuals may subscribe for a fee. It is primarily distributed via email, and is posted on our website, with password protection (for recent issues).

2021/22: Along with the Council's regular meetings, the newsletter requires our most significant commitment of staff resources, though that is usually ancillary to other efforts. The response from members and others receiving the newsletter has been consistently positive. The Council will continue to provide this service weekly via email, except for those who request a hard copy.

Time Frame: Ongoing

6. WATER MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIA

Work to date: An annual WSWC Water Management Symposium has traditionally been held under the auspices of the Executive Committee. However, the Committee has usually asked one of the other committees to take the lead. This includes a biennial Indian Water Rights Settlement Symposia cosponsored with the Native American Rights Fund. The next Council and NARF Symposium will be held in 2021.

In 2019, the Council held a number of meetings and webinars in collaboration with relevant federal agencies, multiple stakeholders, and public and private experts on water resources infrastructure needs and financing strategies. This included exploring state financing authorities, policies, programs and projects, as well as public-private financing and cost sharing mechanisms. One goal is identifying common interests and promoting partnerships.

The Water Resources Committee, under the direction of the Executive Committee, and working with WestFAST, had planned to co-host a symposium on infrastructure with members of the

federal Water Subcabinet during the cancelled 2020 Spring meetings, and will continue to pursue future options to address infrastructure needs, strategies, and federal and state programs.

The Executive Committee considers hosting symposia on any topic and issues as their importance merits.

2021/22: The Legal Committee, under the direction of the Executive Committee, will coordinate with NARF in sponsoring the next Indian Water Rights Settlement Symposium.

Time Frame – Fall 2021

7. ANNUAL REPORT

Work to date: Since its organization in 1965, the Council has prepared and published an annual report, with a brief discussion of the Council’s formation and a detailed summary of its current membership and activities. It is a report of the Council’s meetings and provides an explanation of resolutions and positions and other actions taken by the Council. Further, it includes a description of workshops, seminars and symposia sponsored by the Council, as well as other important activities and events. It also describes the Council’s involvement in major current water policy issues. Lastly, biennially, it includes an audit of the Council’s finances, and current rules of organization. Recently, electronic copies have been distributed.

Time frame: January – September

8. HISTORICAL REVIEW: ISSUES & OUTCOMES

Background: The Council has positions addressing numerous issues and has taken various actions and invested significant resources in attempting to influence outcomes. While the annual report, newsletter, meeting minutes and other sources document such work, there has never been a comprehensive review of some of the major topics addressed and outcomes achieved. Such a summary evaluating the influence the Council has had on outcomes would be useful. The Council has been active in both administrative and congressional affairs, including federal regulatory matters and federal budgeting and appropriations processes. The Council has also provided a forum for states to learn from each other, as well as serving as a resource and catalyst for innovation, such as the WSWC Water Data Exchange. Selecting appropriate metrics for measuring results could be challenging.

2021/22: The Committee will consider the best means of undertaking such a review and metrics for evaluating the Council’s influence on matters that have been brought before the Council. The Committee, given its oversight functions, will use the results of any summary to guide the investment of Council staff and budgetary resources.

Subcommittee:

Time frame:

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