



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **ADMINISTRATION/ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Department of the Interior/ESA/Provo River/Utah**

On March 2, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo was in Utah to celebrate a major milestone related to the Provo River Delta Restoration project funded with by a \$10M investment. Trujillo said: "Accelerated by historic investments from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law [BIL], we are able to celebrate a major milestone for the Central Utah Project Completion Act. The reconnection of the Provo River to the delta will help to safeguard the threatened June sucker, expand recreational opportunities for community residents and accelerate efforts underway to expand access to clean, reliable water throughout the region."

The Provo River has now been diverted into channels and ponds constructed over the past three years to restore and reconnect the river delta to support habitat recovery for the "threatened" June sucker (see WSW #2546). The reconstruction will also provide and improve recreational experiences and safe, reliable water supplies for local communities. The BIL provided \$40M for the Central Utah Project Completion Act to complete the Utah Lake System pipeline, in order to expedite delivery of 60,000 acre-feet of municipal and industrial water to Salt Lake City and Utah Counties. <https://www.doi.gov/news>

Central Water Conservancy District General Manager Gene Shawcroft said: "Turning the Provo River into the re-created delta is a huge step forward in the effort to recover the threatened June sucker. The Delta project has been a long time coming and when completed will open the bottle neck that has been holding the June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program back from the final steps of successfully re-establishing all June sucker life cycles. The Delta will provide the opportunity for successful spawning, rearing and recruiting of new June suckers. The District has been a leader in the June sucker program from its inception and continues to serve as a program partner and a Joint Lead Agency in the Provo River Delta Project."

Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission Executive Director Mike Mills said: "The release of water into the Provo River Delta Restoration Project area represents a significant milestone in both the project and the recovery of June sucker. While a great deal of work remains before the delta is finished, we are now even closer to providing essential habitat for June sucker and creating a unique natural area that will benefit all who use Utah Lake."

June Sucker Recovery Implementation Program Director Chris Keleher said: "The effectiveness of the program would not be possible without each of the partners working within their respective authorities to implement actions to address the threats to June suckers. A major threat has been the lack of habitat for early life stages of the fish to grow and avoid predators. Thanks to the joint-lead agencies, the restoration of the Provo River Delta project completes this essential element to recovery."

### **ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES**

#### **USDA/Water Conservation**

On February 13, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a Western Water and Working Lands Framework for Conservation Action, a comprehensive, multi-state strategy under USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to address key water and land management challenges across the 17 Western States. The latest in a series of conservation action plans, it is designed to provide direction, support and coordination to address multi-state resource concerns and threats, and leverage new scientific tools to guide strategic program implementation on the ground.

The Framework includes guidelines for identifying vulnerable agricultural landscapes and 13 strategies to help NRCS state leaders, water resource managers, and producers.

Under this new framework, NRCS will invest \$25M in three new priority areas and 37 existing priority areas via a WaterSMART Initiative under its Environmental

Quality Incentives Program, in collaboration with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. This investment complements projects led by irrigation districts, water suppliers and other organizations receiving DOI WaterSMART program funds. Working together, NRCS and Reclamation hope to accelerate water conservation and drought resilience and make a bigger impact.

The three new priority areas include: in California, the Madera Irrigation District Area (\$1.5M); in Hawaii, the Kohala Watershed Partnership Area (\$345,000); and in Washington State, the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District West Canal Area (\$1.8M). More than two thirds of the Nation's lands are managed by private agricultural producers, and in the West many are struggling to irrigate their crops due to drought, increasing demand, and climate change.

NRCS Chief Terry Cosby said: "Climate change is taking an enormous toll on farmers and ranchers in the West. Record breaking drought and exhausted water supplies are hurting agricultural operations and entire communities. WaterSMART investments are being directed where they can have the most impact, and the new [Framework] lays the foundation for helping producers and communities address pressing climate challenges and build resiliency for the future. Complemented by investments from the Inflation Reduction Act, USDA is utilizing this framework and all available tools to deliver assistance that the severity of the water supply challenges in the West demand." NRCS has identified six major water and working land management challenges in the West: (1) forecasting water supply; (2) sustaining agricultural productivity; (3) protecting groundwater availability; (4) protecting surface water availability; (5) managing and restoring rangelands and forestlands; and (6) responding to disruptions from catastrophic events.

Strategies identified to address these challenges include: (1) improve the reliability of water supply forecasts; (2) improve soil moisture and irrigation water management; (3) improve on-farm water and nutrient management; (4) modernize water infrastructure; (5) improve community water supplies through watershed projects; (6) promote reuse and conservation of wastewater for agriculture; (7) prolong the life of aquifers; (8) complete managed aquifer recharge projects; (9) reduce surface water withdrawals; (10) install conservation systems that protect water quality; (11) restore and protect streams and wetlands; (12) manage and restore rangelands and forestlands; and (13) increase resilience during disaster recovery.

NRCS will use this framework to set comparable goals for effective program delivery and coordinate and

track progress on helping individuals, entities and communities across the West address their management, conservation and resiliency needs.

From 2020 to 2022, NRCS provided producers with more than \$410M to address drought in the West. NRCS can further leverage tools and coordination to build upon these investments and expand support by advancing innovative targeting at the state, local and regional levels, while also utilizing additional funds from the Inflation Reduction Act that advance both climate mitigation and western water priorities. Also, on February 13, the Biden Administration announced a historic \$728M investment to address drought in the West (see WSW #2544).

## **MEETINGS**

### **Western States Water Council - Spring Meetings**

The WSWC Spring Meetings will be held in Reno, Nevada on May 22-24, at the Peppermill Resort Spa Casino. A block of rooms is being held in the name of the WSWC. The guest room rate for single/double occupancy is \$114.00 per night, plus tax. Our room block deadline is April 22. Any reservations requested after the cut-off shall be accepted, based on availability. There is no registration fee to attend the meetings, but we are asking all individuals participating in person or virtually to register. For details please see: <https://westernstateswater.org/events/2023-spring-201st-meetings/>.

#### **Schedule of Meetings**

##### **Monday, May 22**

1:00 pm Lemmon Valley and Truckee River Tour

##### **Tuesday, May 23**

8:00 am Host State Presentation

8:45 am Water Resources Committee Meeting

12:00 pm Executive Committee (over lunch)

1:30 pm Water Quality Committee Meeting

3:30 pm Legal Committee Meeting

6:00 pm Social Hour

Sponsor: *SWCA Environmental Consultants*

##### **Wednesday, May 24**

8:00 am WSWC Full Council Meeting

12:00 pm Pumped Storage Hydropower Workshop

### **Western States Water Council - Fall Meetings**

The WSWC Fall Meetings will be held in Anchorage, Alaska on September 13-15, at the Aloft Anchorage Hotel. Further information as it becomes available will be posted. See <https://westernstateswater.org/events/wswc-2023-fall-meetings/>.

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**The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is a government entity 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.**