

WestFAST

Western States Federal Agency Support Team
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Work Plan

Updated July 2022

We hereby declare that we as WESTFAST partners will collaborate with the Western States Water Council to guide the development of an appropriation action plan for this partnership.

- An excerpt from the *Declaration of Cooperation*

1.0 Introduction

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration of fourteen Federal agencies with water resources responsibilities in the West (see section 5.0 for Member Agencies and contact information). WestFAST was formally organized in 2008 in response to the Western Governors' Association's (WGA) recommendation to facilitate coordination of federal activities, and to develop and enhance collaborative partnerships among state and federal agencies working on priority water-resource issues (see WestFAST Declaration of Cooperation in Appendix A).

WestFAST works in collaboration with the Western States Water Council (WSWC), a government entity consisting of representatives appointed by the governors of eighteen western states striving to accomplish effective cooperation among member states, and their partners, in the conservation, development and management of water resources. Water policy experts and managers from the fourteen WestFAST federal agencies form a dynamic, flexible team that provides the opportunity for interaction initiated by WSWC, individual states, or the federal government. Higher level (e.g. political, senior career, SES) Principals are designated

by each agency to engage with the WestFAST Team and collaborate directly with the WSWC on relevant topics. The agencies also support a federal liaison responsible for coordinating efforts among the agencies with WSWC. WestFAST collaboration has provided excellent opportunities for cross-agency discussions and leveraging of shared knowledge.

2.0 Focal Areas

The federal agencies that make up WestFAST all have unique roles within western water. WestFAST provides a means for those agencies to collaborate in ways that may not otherwise take place. From the outset the WestFAST team has stressed collaboration in the following areas: Climate Change, Water Availability, Water Use, Water Reuse, and Water Quality.

In March 2022, WestFAST held a Strategy Session to evaluate current priorities and identify areas for future work. This Work Plan reflects outcomes of the 2022 Strategy Session and identifies collaborative opportunities with WGA and the WSWC Committee Work. Focal Areas identified in the 2022 Strategy Session include, but are not limited to:

Data

- Developing the Water Data Exchange (WaDE) Program and opportunities for data collaborations and sharing.

Drought

- Supporting the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS).
- Promoting Federal and State collaboration in the Colorado River Basin.
- Coordinating with the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP).

Wildfire

- Continuing of the Wildfire and Water Resources webinar series and workshops.

Infrastructure

- Collaborating across federal and state agencies on key Western State water-related infrastructure issues.

Other areas of mutual interest and need

- Providing communication on federal funding opportunities.
- Engaging with underrepresented and underserved communities.
- Assisting with conflict avoidance, resolution, and transformation.
- Identifying opportunities for early state engagement on water-related federal rules, regulations, directives, orders and policies.

This Work Plan presumes to be a living document that can be altered as needed to reflect changes in western states and participating WestFAST agencies programs and needs. Work is accomplished through the following sections of the Work Plan through Facilitating Coordination

and Collaboration (Section 3.0) and Support of the WGA and WSWC Committee Work (Section 4.0).

3.0 Coordination and Collaboration

With respect to western water resources, the WestFAST federal member agencies have unique roles individually, collectively, and in collaboration with the states. WestFAST provides a means for member agencies to collaborate among themselves and coordinate with the western states through the Western States Water Council (WSWC). Key areas of coordination and collaboration include:

1. Information sharing
2. Cross-agency workgroups
3. Outreach activities
4. State-Federal partnerships

WestFAST Members coordinate with WSWC and WGA, through their committees, on their development of Resolutions, Annual Work Plans, and Mission Areas. WestFAST facilitates collaboration between WSWC and the federal government, including agency visits, building closer ties with WestFAST Principals, facilitating engagement on new and on-going WSWC and federal policy initiatives, assistance with workshops and symposiums, and meeting regularly with WSWC Executive Committee representatives.

3.1 Information Sharing

WestFAST agencies have many high-priority initiatives that can benefit from coordination with other federal agencies. WestFAST provides a forum to encourage coordination among these agencies and collaboration with western states. To further facilitate information sharing, WestFAST will continue to:

- Hold monthly team calls.
- Participate in workgroups, and with WSWC committees to address priority areas (e.g. Drought, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wildfire and Water Resources, etc.).
- Support the WestFAST Principals meetings to review WestFAST accomplishments and discuss future coordination related to federal water resource programs and policies.
- Produce a monthly newsletter sharing high profile accomplishments, descriptions of new water-related programs and policies, upcoming meetings, and funding opportunities.
- Host regular special topic informational meetings and webinars to promote and facilitate coordination and improve collaboration and engagement with WSWC in addressing western water resources challenges. These informational sessions will be on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies, WSWC members, and other water resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders.

3.2 Cross-Agency Coordination Activities

To continue effective collaboration through participation in a variety of cross-agency workgroups WestFAST will:

- Coordinate with the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP) and support the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS).
- Assist with WSWC Workshops (such as the Wild and Scenic Rivers 2021 Workshop).
- Coordinate with federal, state, and other related organizations to work on sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting improvements that will help organizations assess drought conditions and the possible end or onset of drought for more effective responses.
- Facilitate WestFAST Principals/Water Subcabinet meetings (last held in April 2022).
- Engage and work with the Western Regional Partnership (WRP), which provides a proactive and collaborative framework for senior-policy level federal, state, and tribal leaders to identify common goals and emerging issues in the Southwestern United States.
- Engage with spatial water data workgroups and subcommittees and continuing to engage WSWC member states on how best to share spatial data sets.
- Connect WestFAST member agencies' political and/or senior leadership with WSWC member states to facilitate collaboration and effective working relationships in western water management.
- Identify and nominate, as appropriate, additional agencies with water resources responsibilities in the western states to WestFAST as a member agency.
- Explore alternatives to hire and fund the WestFAST Liaison position.

3.3 Outreach

WestFAST works to improve its visibility and availability to assist with highlighting its agencies western water activities. This is primarily accomplished via the WestFAST website (<https://westernstateswater.org/westfast/>) and the WestFAST newsletter. In addition, WestFAST reaches out to other organizations to increase awareness of this unique state/federal collaboration. To continue to improve visibility and awareness, WestFAST will:

- Maintain and enhance the WestFAST website with current WestFAST activities, events, and updates on WestFAST agency programs and collaborative efforts.
- Publish information about WestFAST informational meetings to federal employees, and WSWC, as appropriate.
- Publish and distribute a monthly WestFAST newsletter to share information.
- Update the WestFAST Fact Sheet and the Outreach Brochure.
- Host regular special topic informational meetings and webinars to promote and facilitate coordination and improve collaboration and engagement with WSWC in addressing western water resources challenges. These informational sessions will be on topics of interest to WestFAST member agencies, WSWC members, and other water resource managers, scientists, and stakeholders.

- Connect and engage with other organizations that share the issues and perspectives of the WSWC as appropriate (e.g. Interstate Council on Water Policy, National Water Supply Alliance, Western Regional Partnership).

3.4 State-Federal Partnerships

WestFAST will provide support to its member agencies’ water initiatives through outreach and facilitating implementation with WSWC member states, as appropriate. Relationship-building with state water agency leadership through WestFAST provides a point of contact for state agencies to make informal connections with member agency staff. WestFAST agencies agree with and support the WSWC goal of developing “integrated collaborative, and grassroots” approaches and greater partnership among state, local, and federal agencies to find “optimal solutions”¹ to the increasing challenges associated with water management in the West. To facilitate this, WestFAST will continue to:

- Work with western states to coordinate funding opportunities tied to Disaster Plans and related Water Resources Management Planning.
- Support regular conferences, workshops, and webinars for education and relationship-building opportunities.
- Serve as a forum to discuss notable water management developments as they arise.
- Promote Federal and State collaboration in the Colorado River Basin.
- Provide information to WSWC regarding initiatives of interest (e.g. to map evapotranspiration and consumptive use, indicators of water quality, land subsidence, groundwater change, drought impacts and land fallowing, and snow water resources).
- Identify opportunities for agency partnering to leverage state and federal funding and cross-agency collaboration on key Western State infrastructure issues and projects.

4.0 WGA and WSWC Committee Work

WestFAST will engage and seek new opportunities to collaborate with the WGA, WSWC, and member states in the, identifications of priority issues, development of related recommendations, and working toward goals outlined in WGA and WSWC Policy Resolutions and WSWC Committee Work Plans. WestFAST will seek to foster exchange of perspectives and information with WSWC and State Members on committee-related work and federal priorities and initiatives.

4.1 Water Resources Committee

- WSWC continues to work with member states and federal agencies through WestFAST to build a robust and performant architecture for accessing and sharing water data through WaDE 2.0 and development of a Western Water Resources Data Access and Analysis Tool (WestDAAT). WestFAST will continue to coordinate and facilitate collaborations and connections to support WADE and WestDAAT.

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- WSWC supports federal programs to maintain and improve the observation, measurement, monitoring and management of western water resources and related data. Such programs include, but are not limited to USGS cooperative stream gaging and groundwater monitoring, NRCS snow survey and water supply forecasting, NASA/USGS Landsat, and EPA water quality monitoring. WestFAST will continue to foster communication and collaboration to facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts.
- WSWC and the California Department of Water Resources (CDWR) have entered into a number of agreements to assist with efforts to improve sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting skill. WestFAST will continue coordination and collaboration to assist with workshops into the future.
- NASA's Western Water Applications Office (WWAO), WestFAST, and WSWC will collaboratively develop ways to identify and address challenges inherent in effectively moving research advances towards improvements in water resources management and project operations to: (1) Strengthen agency partnerships and continue building an inter-agency community to facilitate research to operations (R2O) in water resource management; (2) Develop WSWC's and WestFAST connections to help transition new technologies and information products for water resources management to operational federal programs, including, but not limited to, remote sensing-based measurement technologies and sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) weather forecasting; and (3) Develop a strategy for raising awareness and support within state and federal government for R2O.
- WestFAST will continue to inform and support WSWC's efforts to, build resilience, improve preparedness, and response to drought, floods, and other extreme events.
- WestFAST will continue supporting NIDIS and other weather/climate monitoring and adaptation efforts (including NOAA RISA's work).
- WestFAST will work with states towards implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

4.2 Water Quality Committee

- WestFAST will ensure ongoing coordination and information sharing with regards to federal agency activities related to the clarification of the Clean Water Act jurisdiction and the WOTUS Rule.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed on the 401 certification rule and its requirements.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on activities, ongoing developments, and positions regarding the Water Reuse Action Plan.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on activities, ongoing developments, and positions regarding the Water Transfers Rule.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA's efforts involving nutrients, including Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs/EPA cyanotoxin criteria).

- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA’s rulemaking efforts related to tribes’ ability to obtain “treatment as states” status under the Clean Water Act § 518.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on EPA’s activities involving abandoned hardrock mines and protections for Good Samaritans under the Clean Water Act.
- WestFAST will continue to keep WSWC and its member states informed and updated on Federal policies, rules, and activities involving hydraulic fracturing.
- WestFAST will assist with identifying and coordinating with WSWC member states and other technical or national organizations with common interests in the water quality/quantity nexus to co-host educational workshops or symposia on relevant nexus topics, to develop better collaborative relationships and to find additional potential solutions to nexus problems.

4.3 Legal Committee

- WestFAST will continue working with the Federal Non-Tribal Water Claims Subcommittee to evaluate ways WSWC and WestFAST can improve the effective resolution of federal non-tribal water rights claims; and will continue to support WSWC in defining best practices for addressing non-tribal federal reserved water rights and groundwater protection initiatives.
- WestFAST will continue to work with the Legal Committee to keep WSWC and its member states informed on federal actions regarding CWA jurisdiction, as well as consider the impacts of the new rule(s) on state policies, programs and regulations.
- WestFAST will continue to work with WSWC and its member states on WRDA and Corps related issues, as needed.

4.4 Executive Committee

WestFAST facilitates collaboration with WSWC and WestFAST Member Agencies including, but not limited to, meeting with agency staff, building closer ties with WestFAST Principals, engaging on new and on-going WSWC and federal policy initiatives, assisting with workshops and symposiums, and meeting regularly with WSWC Executive Committee representatives.

5.0 WestFAST Agencies/Members

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Appendix A



Western States Federal Agency Support Team

A Declaration of Cooperation

*Working Together for the Sustainable and
Efficient Use of Western Water Resources*

We, as representatives of our respective Federal agencies, do hereby declare our intent to cooperate as members of a Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WESTFAST) partnership. We will work together whenever and wherever possible throughout the 17 Western States to promote and educate the public on the benefits of sustainable and efficient use of water resources.

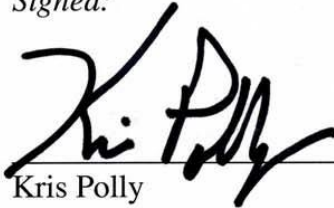
We declare that WESTFAST supports a continued commitment on the part of Federal, and State organizations; working with local, Tribal, and other stakeholders; to improve the effectiveness of collaboration to seek watershed solutions to water issues in the Western States. This effort emphasizes proactive, voluntary, participatory and incentive-based approaches to water resource management and conservation assistance programs throughout the Western States.

We hereby declare that we as WESTFAST partners will collaborate with the Western States Water Council to guide the development of an appropriate action plan for this partnership.

We hereby declare to support, in concept, the establishment of a Federal liaison position to work with the WESTFAST members and the Western States Water Council in developing a collaborative work plan to carry forward joint water resource initiatives. Contributory cost-sharing such a position will be based on authorized and available funds.



Signed:



Kris Polly
Bureau of Reclamation

Date

7-10-08



Michael P. Fallon, P.E.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Date

7/10/08



Mike Shapiro
Environmental Protection Agency

Date

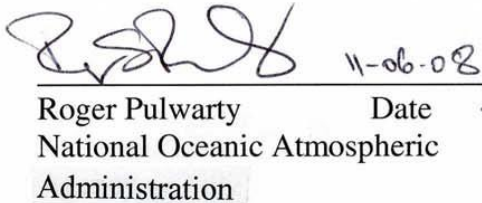
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Ward Staubitz
U.S. Geological Survey

Date

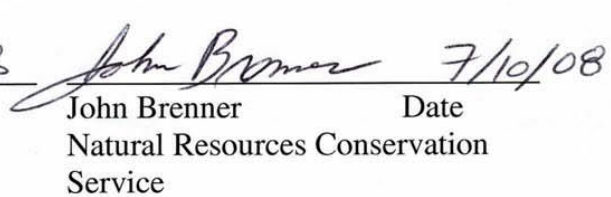
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Roger Pulwarty
National Oceanic Atmospheric
Administration

Date

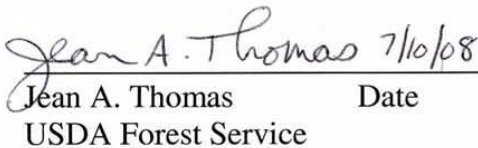
11-06-08



John Brenner
Natural Resources Conservation
Service

Date

7/10/08



Jean A. Thomas
USDA Forest Service

Date

7/10/08



David Diamond
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Date

12/2/08



Bud Cribley
Bureau of Land Management

Date

10/10/08