



# Western States Water

## Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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### **ADMINISTRATION/WATER RESOURCES**

#### **Executive Order/Grantmaking**

On August 7, President Trump signed an Executive Order titled "Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking." Agencies will designate a senior political appointee to create a process for reviewing new Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). They will review and approve all new NOFOs and discretionary grants in coordination with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), involving subject-matter experts as needed. They are to ensure all funding opportunity announcements include "only such requirements as are necessary for an adequate evaluation of the application" and are written in plain language. Appointees will also conduct pre-issuance and annual reviews of discretionary awards. Discretionary awards must avoid redundancy, and align awards with agency priorities, national interests, and presidential policies. Reviews should also favor recipients with lower indirect costs and broaden the pool of awardees beyond frequent past recipients. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/improving-oversight-of-federal-grantmaking/>

#### **NASA/NISAR Mission**

On July 30, the U.S. National Atmospheric and Space Administration (NASA) and Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully launched the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite in India. This jointly developed mission carries an advanced radar system that will produce a dynamic, three-dimensional view of Earth in unprecedented detail. The satellite will monitor nearly all the planet's land and ice-covered surfaces twice every twelve days, including areas of the polar Southern Hemisphere rarely covered by other Earth-observing radar satellites.

NISAR will use two advanced radar instruments that improve upon previous synthetic aperture radar missions. The NASA L-band radar excels at measuring soil moisture, forest biomass, and motion of land and ice surfaces, while the ISRO S-band radar excels at monitoring agriculture, grassland ecosystems, and infrastructure movement. NISAR will be able to "see" through clouds, making it possible to monitor the surface

during storms, as well as in darkness and light. The data collected will be used to track changes in Earth's forests and wetland ecosystems, monitor deformation and motion of the planet's frozen surfaces, and detect the movement of Earth's crust down to fractions of an inch – a key measurement in understanding how the land surface moves before, during, and after earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and landslides. Data will also be used to map crop growth, track plant health, monitor soil moisture, and assess how forests, wetlands, agricultural areas, and permafrost change over time. It will help protect communities by providing timely, detailed information for decisionmakers for disaster response, infrastructure monitoring, and agricultural management.

Karen St. Germain, Director, NASA Earth Science Division, said: "This launch marks the beginning of a new way of seeing the surface of our planet so that we can understand and foresee natural disasters and other changes in our Earth system that affect lives and property." See <https://www.nasa.gov/missions/nisar/5-things-to-know-about-powerful-new-u-s-india-satellite-nisar/>.

Steven Volz, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Principal Committee on Earth Observations, said: "At NASA first and then at NOAA, I have eagerly awaited the expected observations and discoveries from NISAR. This mission will answer many crucial solid and liquid Earth science questions. If it delivers as expected and hoped for, NOAA will find great value in the mission. The product suite will include flood mapping, sea ice motion, extent, and break up, flood vulnerable area subsidence maps, aquifer content, and more. NOAA has observations in all these areas, but our experience has always shown that more and different observations added to our systems and services are always helpful."

#### **Wetlands Conservation**

On August 4, the Department of the Interior (DOI) announced \$102.9M in North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) funding has been approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, providing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its

partners the ability to conserve, restore or enhance 548,242 acres of critical wetland and associated upland habitat for migratory birds across North America. NAWCA's second grant cycle for FY26 will open February 26, 2026.

DOI Secretary Doug Burgum said, "For more than 35 years, [NAWCA] has fostered partnerships and an investment in wetland conservation that yield both ecological and economic returns for local communities and a broad range of industries, including tourism, commercial fisheries, forestry and agriculture. These grants will increase and maintain healthy bird populations and wetland habitat, while supporting local economies and improving public access to recreational activities for American traditions, such as hunting, fishing and birdwatching."

## **ORGANIZATIONS/WATER RESOURCES**

### **National Water Resources Association**

On July 29-31, the National Water Resources Association (NWRA) held its 2025 Western Water Seminar in Park City, Utah beginning with a welcome by Mayor Nann Worel. Other dignitaries addressing the group included U.S. Representatives Mike Kennedy (R-UT) and Celeste Malloy (R-UT). A physician and attorney, Kennedy sits on three House Committees: Natural Resources; Science, Space and Technology; and Transportation and Infrastructure. He emphasized the role of water in protecting public health and safety, as well as addressing federal overreach and focusing on fiscal responsibility. Malloy also sits on the House Natural Resources Committee, as well the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and is Vice-Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies. She addressed permitting energy and water projects, as well as attempts to balance federal spending, including President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill and budget reconciliation.

Dustin Sherer, Senior Advisor, DOI Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, provided a scripted perspective on western water challenges and opportunities, before addressing questions from the audience. He emphasized this Administration's commitment to supporting western water development, addressing and streamlining permitting requirements, while striving to ensure fiscal responsibility.

A number of speakers and panel discussions focused on various topics, including: an update and perspectives on the Colorado River and the Columbia River Treaty; terminal lakes in the West, including the Great Salt Lake and the Salton Sea; water from our forests to faucets; the water-energy nexus and

interdependency; the role of real-time science; seasonal streamflows as a product of snowmelt and groundwater; desalination; and water reuse. A number of NWRA caucuses held discussions on groundwater, irrigation, and municipal water management challenges.

WSWC Executive Director Tony Willardson presented on Western Water at a Crossroads – Policy, Planning and Partnerships and fielded questions together with Michelle Bushman, Deputy Director and General Counsel. He addressed the history of the WSWC, noting this year marks the 60th Anniversary since its creation by Western Governors.

Tony shared some of WSWC's involvement in: evaluating early interstate and international water transfer proposals; the advent of the Clean Water Act; the focus on federal programs and policies; the development of a WSWC-WGA publication on Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future; the creation of a Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST); support for remote sensing to measure and monitor water use, specifically Landsat thermal infrared imagery and OpenET tools; the development of the WSWC's Water Data Exchange (WaDE), Western States Water Data Access and Analysis Tool (WestDAAT 2.0), and Western States Water Conservation Application Tool (WestCAT); as well as WSWC-WGA reports on water transfers and water infrastructure.

Tony made several observations noting: (1) we will continue to encounter crossroads on our western water journey, and the path forward will require tough decisions; (2) we can and should learn from the experience of decades past; (3) data on water rights, water supply, and water use are critical for evaluating options and sound decision making; (4) State and local agencies must step up and take the lead in the absence of federal financial and technical resources; (5) leveraging various public and private resources to address our water problems will be increasingly important in the future; and (6) we can leave a more waterwise world for future generations.

## **PEOPLE**

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt (R) has appointed **Robert Singletary**, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental (ODEQ) Quality, as a WSWC member and member of the Water Quality Committee. Rob has more than 21 years of public service and previously served as Deputy Executive Director, Chief of Staff and General Counsel at ODEQ. Robert is replacing **Shellie Chard**, ODEQ Director of the Water Quality Division.

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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.**