MINUTES
of the
208th COUNCIL MEETING
DoubleTree San Pedro Port of Los Angeles
San Pedro, CA

September 26, 2025

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MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT (*via zoom*)

ALASKA	**--**
ARIZONA	**--**
CALIFORNIA	Jeanine Jones Joaquin Esquivel
COLORADO	*Lauren Ris*
IDAHO	Mat Weaver John Simpson
KANSAS	Earl Lewis Connie Owen
MONTANA	Anna Pakenham Stevenson
NEBRASKA	Justin Lavene *Jesse Bradley*
NEVADA	Cathy Erskine Jennifer Carr *Adam Sullivan*
NEW MEXICO	*John Rhoderick* *Tanya Trujillo*
NORTH DAKOTA	Jennifer Verleger
OKLAHOMA	Julie Cunningham Sara Gibson Robert Singletary
OREGON	*Doug Woodcock*

SOUTH DAKOTA	Nakaila Steen
TEXAS	*Brooke Paup*
UTAH	Candice Hasenyager Mark Stratford
WASHINGTON	Ria Berns
WYOMING	Jennifer Zygmunt

GUESTS

Trent Blomberg, Arizona Department of Water Resources

WESTFAST

Travis Yonts, Bureau of Reclamation
Chad Abel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jason Olive, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Christopher Carlson, USDA Forest Service
Paula Cutillo, Bureau of Land Management
Roger Gorke, Environmental Protection Agency

STAFF

J.D. Strong
Tony Willardson (former Executive Director)
Michelle Bushman
Elysse Campbell

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Julie Cunningham, Chair welcomed everyone.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Julie called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on April 25, in Lincoln, Nebraska. There was a motion, a second and the minutes were unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORT SUMMARIES

Julie, WSWC Chair, provided an overview of items previously discussed. In regard to the Strategic Direction, the Committee aims to approve and launch the strategic plan in January 2026, focusing on a three-year horizon. We plan to tackle some "low-hanging fruit" in the first year. JD and Michelle will develop a draft by late October or late this year. This draft will then be distributed to all members. Members can submit their comments to their respective Executive Committee members for discussion within their states, with feedback then consolidated by JD and Michelle. We hope to finalize this process in the next few months.

The Spring 2026 Meeting will be held in Washington D.C., on April 20-24, the Summer 2026 Meeting will be held virtually, and our Fall 2026 Meeting will potentially be held in Oregon. The consensus is to aim for two in-person meetings and one virtual meeting annually. We also confirmed that we have the flexibility to craft meeting agendas as needed and will be reaching out to members for input.

Regarding WaDE, the consensus is to form an Ad Hoc Committee for the WaDE and WestDAAT program. We are still seeking volunteers for this committee. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know.

Our financial standing is sound, with one year of operating reserves currently in the bank. We have received $378,000 in dues to date, with $270,000 still outstanding. We will be reaching out to members who have not yet paid their dues. Candice, Earl, and I have been working with Tony and JD to clarify our various budget accounts, and we are excited to share a more detailed understanding of these with all members, including developing SOPs and lists for tracking.

Action Items for Members:

- Review the draft strategic plan by late October and send your comments to your Executive Committee member.
- Volunteer for the ad hoc committee on WaDE and WestDAAT.
- Share ideas for the 2026 meeting agenda formats, ensuring they align with the strategic plan's outcomes.
- Watch for upcoming budget walkthroughs from the Executive Committee members.

RESOLUTIONS OF APPRECIATION

J.D. Strong mentioned that there are a couple of Resolutions of Appreciation currently in development, which will be brought to the next WSWC meeting in April.

However, a significant Resolution of Appreciation from the WSWC is dedicated to Tony Willardson, former WSWC Director who joined online. J.D. read the resolution, which highlighted Tony's distinguished 46-year career entirely devoted to the WSWC. This includes 16 years as Executive Director and various other roles since he joined in 1979. The resolution noted Tony's extraordinary passion and commitment to the mission of the WSWC and to western states, and his

leadership that has guided both external and internal WSWC matters. The members of the WSWC recognized Tony's extraordinary contributions and expressed their sincerest appreciation for his knowledge, passion, and advocacy for western water resources, and for the opportunity to have associated with Tony as a friend and colleague. The WSWC members extended their best wishes to Tony in his retirement and future endeavors.

Tony expressed his sincere appreciation for the recognition, stating, "It's been an honor to serve with many of you for many years and your predecessors." He added that he misses seeing everyone and looks forward to the new leadership and the WSWC moving forward with its new strategic directions, offering his help in any way possible.

Julie thanked Tony again for everything and then moved to approve the Resolution, which passed by acclamation.

WESTFAST REPORT

Roger Gorke noted that WestFAST stands ready to assist and provide input on any of the new resolutions, when appropriate. He then introduced Jason Olive from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as WestFAST's new liaison. Roger highlighted Jason's unique perspective on partnerships and collaboration, emphasizing the importance of collaboration even without specific outcomes.

J.D., a former Fish and Wildlife Director, also spoke highly of Jason, noting his experience working with him at the state level on shared fisheries and water resource issues. J.D. expressed his confidence that Jason will be a valuable liaison for the WestFAST team.

Jason expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve and looks forward to connecting states and federal agencies, and expanding those connections into the broader "fishy world." He provided the following updates:

There has been significant turnover within WestFAST this year, with over 30% of representatives changing since January. Efforts are underway to fill these positions and update the member section of the website.

WestFAST has begun updating its work plan with the goal of aligning it with the WSWC's and committee work plans. They anticipate having an updated work plan ready by January 2026, after consulting with staff and state representatives.

The WestFAST webinar series will resume next month. The first webinar is scheduled for October 20th and will feature a presentation from the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) on their use of Landsat data. An invitation will be sent out next week. This will be the first in a planned series of webinars focusing on Landsat.

Michelle mentioned that if anyone is using Landsat data, WestFAST would like to feature as many states as possible in these recorded webinars. Please let us know if you are interested in

sharing your experiences. These are the "stories" or "narratives" we've been discussing, and we want to share them. Even if you only have a short update, we can combine presentations, but we would also like to offer states the opportunity to do a full one-hour webinar on how they are using this data. Jason confirmed that the webinars are open for state agency staff to attend.

Jeanine Jones offered a suggestion for WestFAST's federal partners, particularly USGS and NOAA. Since Roger and Jason volunteered to help with resolutions, and given the recent quick edit on data resolution in the Water Resources Committee, it would be helpful if federal partners could provide the correct budget line-item names for relevant programs. This information is crucial for discussions with congressional members and for developing the associated one-pagers we discussed, as some program names on current positions were either incorrect or outdated.

STATE REPORTS

All members who provided a state report expressed their appreciation to the State of California and the WSWC Staff for hosting such a productive meeting.

Nevada: Jennifer Carr - on the water quality side, an effort is underway to develop direct potable reuse (DPR) regulations. We are currently asking interested entities to take the lead in developing the necessary framework and documentation, as our agency's bandwidth is limited. Based on the regulatory development cycle, we anticipate having a draft ready for our Legislative Council submission by June 30th, meaning this will ramp up quickly in the spring. I may have a more detailed update by April.

I was recently approved for 11 new positions in our biennial budget, and currently reviewing the funding mechanisms to ensure they can be filled. Due to significant growth, particularly in underground injection control (UIC) geothermal activity, we have established a new branch in water pollution control dedicated to UIC. The staffing for this function has increased from 1.5 full-time employees to five, including a new supervisor.

Last thing, according to an EPA Region 9 grant manager, the ASAP system is expected to remain open during the government shutdown. This means we should still be able to draw grant funds, provided the draws do not require manual human action based on the grant's terms and conditions.

Cathy Erskine discussed a Nevada Supreme Court decision, *Baker Ranch v. State Engineer*. The Court recently upheld the State Engineer's inherent authority to strategically manage investigations, ruling that the decision to pause an "alleged violation" (AV) investigation is not a final, appealable decision. This outcome strengthens the State Engineer's ability to efficiently manage water right investigations and helps prevent premature lawsuits challenging non-final administrative actions.

The Division of Water Resources is experiencing increased pressure to accelerate its permitting process, largely due to the federal government's expedited timelines under the FAST-

41 initiative. This is creating strain, particularly with the mining industry, as the Division must still adhere to statutory procedures, including publication and protest periods, which contrasts with the faster federal pace.

Jennifer noted that they are concerned that the rapid pace of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) work under FAST-41 will severely limit the time and resources available for stakeholders, such as tribes, to effectively comment on proposed actions (often limited to 5-6 days). The inability to rely on mitigations established under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) during the expedited FAST-41 process increases the risk that our state-level permits (e.g., air permits, water pollution control permits) will be challenged. This could ultimately lengthen our state permitting process, despite the intended goal of acceleration.

California: Jeanine Jones - California voters approved a $10 billion climate bond last year, with a significant portion allocated to water. For the first time, a substantial amount of bond money was earmarked for grants (not loans) to local agencies, including $480 million specifically for dam safety-related projects. The 2014 water bond allocated $2.7 billion for storage, administered by the California Department of Water Resources (CDWR). Eight projects were approved initially (five surface water, three groundwater). Recently, a third surface water project dropped out, leaving only one surface water project remaining, primarily because these projects proved unaffordable for local agencies, even with state funding. This highlights the growing focus and attention on groundwater storage initiatives.

Joaquin Esquivel addressed the recent catastrophic urban-wildland interface fires (like those in LA, Altadena, and previous ones in Sonoma County and Paradise) which have devastated water systems, leading to severe issues such as benzene contamination. The California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) has developed a playbook to bring systems back online. The fires have created opportunities to discuss system consolidation, as smaller, mutual water companies (like those affected in Altadena) struggle significantly more than large, well-resourced utilities (like LADWP) to rebuild.

An update to the Bay-Delta Water Quality Control Plan is expected to be completed within the next year, following an effort that began in 2009. This update addresses the required in-stream flow amounts necessary to protect the entire Bay-Delta watershed, which covers about 60% of the state's landmass, and will require contributions from all water right holders.

California has adopted intended direct potable reuse regulations. The SWRCB collaborated with the Water Research Foundation to fund the underlying science and analysis, the results of which are beneficial to other states developing similar policies. The SWRCB can regulate agriculture and nitrates in their discharges via irrigated lands regulatory programs. A current effort is underway to synthesize the latest science (e.g., the effects of cover cropping and holistic practices) to potentially update the general order for regulating nutrient application, moving beyond simple applied-to-removed ratios.

A three-year, $60 million effort will culminate in the launch of a new water rights data system in approximately two weeks. This investment aims to modernize California's water rights

administration, bringing it up to par with other Western states and providing the fundamental data necessary for critical policy discussions.

Julie asked Joaquin who was on their agricultural (AG) panel.

Joaquin emphasized the importance of ensuring the AG panel includes members with strong academic backgrounds. We are striving for a balanced panel that incorporates diverse perspectives, including environmental justice advocates pushing for a more aggressive nitrate regulatory regime, and growers who are grappling with the current economic realities of thin margins and significant pressures. The goal is to provide the SWRCB with recommendations. These may involve potentially re-examining the executive order that establishes the framework for how the regions approach applied and removed nutrients. We are considering whether this is the right time to refine and make that framework more sophisticated.

As regulators, the SWRCB is a full-time, five-member board. Our current structure originated during the Reagan Administration, merging pollution control boards (created in the 1930s) with the water rights office to ensure that water quality and quantity were discussed together. Approximately ten years ago, the Division of Drinking Water also joined the SWRCB. This consolidation allows us to function as a comprehensive "one-stop shop" for water regulation. We are fortunate to have state authorities that enable a closer regulatory relationship with the agricultural community. This is a delicate balance, which I certainly understand, having worked on agricultural policy for Senator Boxer for eight and a half years in D.C., and having a personal background in agriculture. We recognize the difficulties growers currently face due to market and labor pressures. Our regulatory approach, especially on potentially costly issues, is being handled with careful consideration.

Julie asked Jeanine if the $10 billion bonding capacity was for damn infrastructure. Jeanine confirmed that the $10 billion bonding capacity for the climate bond does include water infrastructure, with one-third of that total ($3.33 billion) designated for the water side. A portion of the water allocation is specifically directed toward the state Dam Safety Program, which regulates approximately 1,500 dams. Jeanine emphasized that this program has been historically underfunded, despite the state's significant seismic and hydrologic risks. The funding is intended as grant money to be provided to local agencies for the specific purpose of fixing or rehabilitating their dams, rather than solely being used for enhancing compliance or regulatory aspects of the Dam Safety Program itself.

Jennifer Carr mentioned a recent conversation with WestFAST regarding HABs. The group noted that current efforts are largely reactionary, focusing on public health protection for people, pets, and livestock. Jennifer expressed interest in shifting toward prevention and asked whether Joaquin's AG Panel considers nutrient loading to streams that contribute to HABs formation, suggesting a broader conversation about nutrient reduction.

Joaquin confirmed that the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Programs (managed by regional boards) are designed to protect both surface water and groundwater. He emphasized that the issue extends beyond AG, encompassing nutrient management "writ large." Previously, the group

attempted a comprehensive approach to "biostimulatory substances" (including both nitrate and phosphorus) but has since narrowed its focus to HABs to better identify primary drivers.

Joaquin highlighted several ongoing projects, including: utilizing Landsat data for early detection of color changes indicative of a HABs. This triggers automated emails to county and internal staff for follow-up investigation; recognizing that AG and dairies are significant sources in some watersheds, alongside wastewater treatment plants. The goal is to comprehensively identify and manage the sources of nutrient loading; and regulatory climate. Joaquin noted that data gathering is sometimes met with apprehension from sectors like AG, which anticipate regulatory action. He suggested that a comprehensive, data-driven approach helps to "lower the temperature" by framing the issue as a nutrient problem broadly, not just an AG problem. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment is currently developing public health goals for the HAB-related compounds (microcystins and others) to establish the necessary health-based standards (e.g., contact standards).

Jeanine provided a perspective on HABs in the large state-owned reservoirs. While signs are posted, she has observed numerous instances of families, children, and dogs ignoring the warnings and entering the visibly contaminated water. She stressed the urgent need for enhanced outreach and education to prevent injuries and mitigate the risk of future lawsuits.

Utah: Candice Hasenyager wanted to let everyone know that John Mackey, Director, Utah Division of Water Quality, has announced he's going to retire at the end of the year.

Currently, 100% of the state is experiencing some level of drought, with areas entering extreme drought conditions. The lack of precipitation this summer, particularly from June 5 through August 25, has made the situation difficult. The Great Salt Lake (GSL) is at approximately 4191', which is only a couple of feet above its record low. Depending on winter snowpack, managing GSL levels and associated concerns will be a significant challenge.

We are actively addressing water scarcity requiring action from all sectors, not just agriculture. While agriculture often bears the brunt of the criticism, the problem involves water quality, water quantity, and how water is used across the entire Great Salt Lake Basin.

We are engaged in several significant planning initiatives. Updating the comprehensive statewide plan; Great Salt Lake Basin Integrated Plan - a plan focusing on the entire basin; Unified Water Infrastructure Plan (UWIP), which is a considerable effort to compile and prioritize all state water infrastructure needs for the next 20 years. This includes everything from water treatment plants and drinking water systems to irrigation canals (excluding on-farm infrastructure). The cost of this initiative is substantial. The State Legislature has directed us to propose a funding mechanism through a new fee, which is shaping up to be a significant undertaking for the upcoming session.

Dam safety is also a major concern in Utah. Approximately 100 high-hazard dams do not meet minimum safety standards. While water rights regulate these structures, the Board of Water Resources funds safety efforts. The current annual appropriation of $3.8 million is insufficient, as

it barely covers one dam compared to the estimated $480 million in total need. The legislature is exploring potential fee-based ideas, possibly targeting properties in the high-hazard dam flood plains, to raise the necessary capital.

Conservation remains a vital focus, specifically through efforts to improve the metering of secondary water systems and expanding landscape incentive programs.

Mark Stratford - On the water right side, the Utah Legislature has provided significant funding to the Division of Water Rights to install metering and telemetry devices across both the Colorado Basin and the Great Salt Lake Basin. This three-year project is currently underway. This effort is vital for preparing for potential federal regulation on the Colorado River, as it requires the simultaneous and coordinated regulation of all individual stream systems within the basin. The new system will enhance transparency and facilitate the creation of a comprehensive "Water Rights Network," documenting thousands of water rights across the entire basin.

We are working to educate the public on how the doctrine of prior appropriation can adapt to changing water needs, addressing common challenges that label the doctrine as antiquated or encouraging of waste.

The legislature directed the Division of Water Rights to adopt a distribution management plan for water rights located below the meander line of the GSL (primarily related to mineral and salt recovery operations using evaporation ponds). The plan uniquely incorporates the principle of multiple use sustained yield alongside the principle of prior appropriation, recognizing the GSL's status as a terminal lake with no downstream priority calls. Under this plan, a distribution schedule based on lake elevation has been established. As lake levels drop, these mineral extraction companies will be curtailed. Lake levels measured on June 15th determine the following year's extraction allowances.

To encourage conservation, the plan includes exceptions for voluntary arrangements. Companies that voluntarily contribute water to the lake when levels are higher can continue withdrawing at smaller rates, even as the lake drops to lower elevations where they would otherwise be fully cut off under the standard priority schedule. This innovative approach is a way for us to address unique situational needs while adhering to the core tenets of prior appropriation.

Joaquin noted that California's large number of pre-1914 water right holders makes collecting data without triggering adjudication difficult, creating a rocky relationship with some holders. Mark explained that the Utah State Engineer has the authority to administer and require measurement/data collection for all water rights, including those dating back to the very beginning, even without a completed adjudication. This historic statewide jurisdiction allows Utah to require data routinely, often through change applications, circumventing the specific challenge faced in California.

Julie asked Mark about the metering program. Mark confirmed that the metering program applies to all water sources, but the primary investment and focus are currently on surface water, specifically related to the GSL and the Colorado River.

Mark clarified that the GSL Distribution Management Plan addresses surface water only. While Utah does have areas with conjunctive management (groundwater and surface water), most current management plans are treated somewhat separately, focusing either on groundwater or surface water individually.

Cathy mentioned she would be interested in connecting Mark with her state engineer regarding these distribution and management approaches, to which Mark responded favorably.

Idaho: Mat Weaver spoke on the impact of the Idaho Act, which includes a 3% holdback on the current fiscal year budget. In response, the state is conducting government efficiency reviews, consolidating services across bureaus and agencies, and examining all operations. As part of this effort, I am currently serving as the acting director of a second agency, the Soil Water Conservation Commission, which is being considered for integration into Water Resources. We anticipate further disruption in this regard as the reorganization progresses.

Idaho is currently in year three of what they call the "Quagga Saga" eradication effort in the Snake River. Quagga veligers were first detected in the Columbia River system in Fall 2023, specifically in the Snake River near Twin Falls. Forensics investigations suggest the invasive species were introduced when a ski boat discharged ballast into one of the main pools. We are preparing for the third year of treatment using a chelated copper product which aquatic experts will recognize as highly effective, but known to impact the entire river ecosystem. The good news is that the treatment area is shrinking: it has decreased from a 12-mile distribution area to a 7-mile area, with plans to target only 3.5 miles this year. However, challenges remain due to the incised canyon geography. Several sinkholes in the area are over 100 feet deep, making complete mixing of the treatment difficult. We suspect that adult quagga mussels are surviving and lingering in these deep holes. Idaho has committed to a five-year eradication effort. If they are not successful by that time, they plan to reevaluate their approach. The Idaho Department of Agriculture is exerting an incredible amount of effort, staffing, and funding toward eradicating this invasive species.

Idaho passed significant domestic exemption legislation this spring that modified water right filing exemptions for domestic wells. The long-standing exemption allowed for diversion without a permit for domestic or stock use, limited to 13,000 gallons per day and a half-acre of irrigation, and also applied to "any other purpose." The new legislation limits the "any other purpose" category to 2.8 acre-feet annually. Furthermore, the domestic exemption now applies to individual subdivision lot owners whose water comes from community systems. This change is intended to encourage the use of community wells over individual domestic wells on every lot. However, for subdivisions located in critical groundwater areas, groundwater management areas, and moratorium areas, the domestic exemption is now limited solely to in-house use and stock watering, meaning all irrigation must be met from a separate, mitigated source. This mitigation requirement addresses the perceived inequity where the irrigation and municipal communities were spending millions to reduce use and meet mitigation obligations, while tens of thousands of domestic homes with half-acre irrigation were not required to participate.

The legislation also includes new enforcement criteria requiring any domestic use exceeding the exemption limits to "be corrected within 90 days," or face civil penalties of $500 per one-tenth acre irrigated. This new enforcement mechanism is expected to place significant pressure on our department. We anticipate further legislation this session aimed at clean-up and gaining more support, despite the current budget reductions.

Despite the budget cuts, our department received healthy budget improvements last session, including five new full-time employees (FTEs) and the creation of a Water Administration Bureau. For the first time, our department now has a full bureau of 17 FTEs dedicated to conjunctive management and water administration in Idaho. I estimate that at least half of these resources will focus on the Eastern Snake Plain.

Echoing Utah's sentiments, Idaho experienced a severely dry spring and summer, resulting in a high volume of storage use in the Snake River system. If we face poor snowpack this winter, we are likely headed for significant challenges next year. Our new water settlement on the Eastern Snake Plain is protecting an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 wells that are allowed to pump under the mitigation plan, but a poor winter will surely stress-test that agreement.

Finally, a book was recently published that might be of interest: Basin 63: A Philip Chandler Thriller. For context, Basin 63 is the Boise River drainage administrative basin. The tagline reads, "In the arid Idaho Desert, water is power and murder is profitable. Justice dries up faster than desert rain in this gripping crime thriller by Scott McIntosh." It is quite surreal to read a crime thriller that features your department, and potentially yourself, alongside recognizable legislators, consultants, and developers. While I cannot strongly encourage reading it, it certainly offers a unique perspective.

John Simpson began by commending Mat's participation as the current director, noting that the agency's leadership is now regularly attending WSWC meetings. He emphasized that these meetings provide a crucial opportunity for private attorneys like himself to gain insight into the complex challenges including budget constraints and administrative pressures that state agencies are navigating. He provided a specific example of an issue in Idaho where an interest group is advocating for independent hearing officers to handle all contested cases before the department. He noted that the IDWR traditionally handles initial review due to its technical expertise, and this proposal is causing stress on departmental resources, raising questions about funding and the impact on existing staff who often juggle hearing officer duties with other full-time roles. He expressed a strong disagreement with this effort, believing it to be unfounded and demanding.

Regarding water supply, he echoed concerns about the severe conditions in the Upper Snake River system. He highlighted the American Falls Reservoir, which holds about 1.7 million acre-feet but is currently at only 3% capacity (roughly 50,000 acre-feet). This critically low-level impacts water diversion, water quality, and power generation downstream. He stressed that a "banner year" of precipitation is required just to begin refilling the system.

Further, he discussed the difficulties facing groundwater users who rely on private recharge for mitigation purposes. Since this private recharge is contingent on the Bureau of Reclamation

not storing water and the state not diverting it for publicly managed recharge, he suggested that the region could face tough times if conditions do not improve.

John concluded by expressing his hope that more private individuals would attend these meetings to gain a deeper appreciation for the extensive work undertaken by state agencies.

Kansas: Earl Lewis expressed appreciation for the dam safety discussion, noting that it's a priority in Kansas. We have been trying to bolster our Dam Safety Program through legislative changes for the past few sessions. A key challenge stems from a change made about 12 years ago that deregulated certain low-hazard dams between 50 and 125 acre-feet. These dams no longer require a permit or permission to be constructed. This deregulation was primarily driven by agricultural and irrigation interests, particularly in the eastern part of the state where consistent streamflow is limited. Over the past 12 years, approximately 50 such dams have been added to our inventory annually. While we currently regulate about 2,500 dams, the deregulation reduced the regulated inventory from 6,500 to 2,500. This leaves a substantial number of smaller, unregulated dams which, if located incorrectly, could still pose significant issues. While we had considered $3 million a year for dam safety to be good progress, the overall need makes that figure feel insufficient. We plan to continue efforts to address this.

A recurring legislative issue, similar to what Utah has experienced, involves dams in areas undergoing urbanization. Dams that were once low-hazard agricultural structures now have houses being built downstream. This reclassifies them as higher hazard, necessitating costly upgrades for the original dam owner. This often leads to disputes, with dam owners arguing that the new homeowners should bear the cost of the upgrades since they caused the change in hazard classification. A central question we face is how to inform downstream landowners that they are in a dam breach inundation area, ideally before they build a home there. I anticipate that this will be a key discussion point in our upcoming legislative session.

Weather wise, Kansas is generally moving out of drought conditions, though a few areas remain slightly dry. We are thankful for the improvement compared to the last few years. The western part of the state that is a groundwater-dominated region is implementing changes mandated by House Bill 2279 (passed two legislative sessions ago). This bill requires Groundwater Management Districts (GMDs) to develop specific plans to address their water issues and submit them by July 1st of next year. There has been a positive shift in perspective within the area, moving away from "mining" the aquifer toward achieving stable water levels. We have spent the last decade focusing on the science and convincing stakeholders of the need for stability. The current challenge is determining the speed and necessary changes to transition from a declining to a stable situation. Working with the GMDs on these required changes is an ongoing and increasingly complex process as the deadline approaches.

We are actively trying to strengthen several of our water right rules. Due to past political leadership favoring generosity toward water users, the authority of the Chief Engineer had been limited. We are working to restore that authority by tightening regulations on how far wells can be moved and making it easier for the division to act when senior water rights claims are impaired.

Also, by improving our meter requirements to prevent tampering and ensure accurate measurement. This process is necessary but may prove difficult.

Connie and I continue to serve on a legislative Water Program Task Force with an 18-month mandate. We have met four times and have two more meetings scheduled in November. The task force has three primary objectives, which are: (1) documenting threats to the state's water supply (currently developing a report); (2) determining necessary action items and policy changes; and (3) developing funding strategies for those actions. We anticipate reaching out to some of you soon for information and potential assistance in advocating for effective water strategies to our legislature. We believe that some of your ideas could be beneficial here in Kansas as well.

Earl expressed his sincere appreciation for the high level of interaction and the fantastic format of the last two days. He noted Anna's efforts in chairing the Water Resource Committee were excellent. He strongly encourages everyone to continue supporting this collaborative effort.

Connie Owen reported on an innovative pilot project at Tuttle Creek Reservoir utilizing a water injection dredge barge. This effort is a partnership between the water office and the Corps of Engineers, and it represents the first time this technology has been used in a reservoir setting.

Water injection dredging is a proven technology used globally in harbors and waterways. The process involves injecting water at high pressure to the bottom of the lake to resuspend sediment, create a density current, and allow the sediment to flow more readily out through a low-level outlet. The goal is not to suddenly flush out the sediment, but rather to mimic the river's natural process, balancing the inflow and outflow of sediment.

This project is being monitored extensively by researchers from Kansas State University and the USGS. They are collecting comprehensive data on the amount of sediment moving out, downstream water quality, habitat, and turbidity. This initial monitoring period will include two more sessions, one in the spring and one in the summer, to assess the overall success and impact across three seasons (fall, spring, and summer).

In conjunction with this, a major national sedimentation summit is currently taking place in the area, drawing experts from across the country. Additionally, there will be a large ceremony on Monday involving Corps Commanders, key legislators who supported the project, and representatives from our congressional delegation. This project is a culmination of years of effort to secure funding and establish this partnership, and it is incredibly exciting to see this long-term vision become a reality.

Connie mentioned she was not entirely sure of the timeline for the ongoing project, but confirmed that the team plans to analyze the current data before proceeding with the next dredging session. We anticipate having some draft analyses to review within the next couple of months. Initially, the project was budgeted at approximately $4 million, split equally between state and Corps funding. While it took many years to secure the funding we received the state's $2 million ($1 million at a time) a couple of years ago, the overall cost has increased significantly. We

informed the Corps that we would not be providing additional funds, requiring them to cover the remaining costs. The total project cost is now approximately $9 million.

There was considerable discussion about the ownership and procurement of the dredge (State ownership vs. Corps ownership vs. rental). Ultimately, the Corps, as the lead agency, decided they would own the custom-built dredge. They hired the contractor and oversaw its construction. Interestingly, the dredge was built in Topeka, Kansas, which is only an hour from the lake and where our office is located. I saw it at the fabrication site where it was being built. It was estimated that the delivery process would require 20 semi-trucks to transport all the disassembled components. They will transport it to the lake, reassemble it, use it, and then apparently disassemble it again this winter for removal.

Jeanine asked about the technology used to measure removal efforts (e.g, sonar, LIDAR). Earl responded that the primary technology is bathymetry. He added that there is also suspended sediment monitoring in the lake, and the USGS gages downstream are measuring turbidity and other constituents.

Joaquin inquired whether pre-dredging sediment samples were taken to assess the potential for mobilization, particularly concerning contaminants like mercury. He noted that many reservoirs that could benefit from sediment management unfortunately contain mercury, raising concerns about its mobilization.

Connie confirmed that many core samples were taken, and the Kansas Geological Survey conducted extensive testing ahead of time. Earl added that this sampling was one of the first steps taken when the project began. They secured sediment samples and sent them to ERDC in Mississippi to determine sediment quality and whether the material was conducive to the proposed technology. He mentioned there may still be a video on the website showing how the technology works in a large aquarium setting. Connie noted that the video was from ERDC and confirmed that the Corps maintains a webpage dedicated to the Water Injection Dredge Pilot Project, which may contain additional information.

Candice inquired about potential concerns with fish in the reservoir. Connie noted that the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is actively involved in all monitoring and impact assessments.

Roger Gorke suggested this topic could be a good candidate for a webinar. Connie was glad he brought it up, as the Corps recorded a webinar on this about a week ago. She believes it's accessible on the Water Injection Dredge webpage, through the Corps of Engineers Kansas City District.

North Dakota: Jennifer Verleger - For the second consecutive week, North Dakota is the only state with zero drought conditions! Alaska also had some zero drought this week, but previously it had some.

The Department of Water Resources (ND DWR) received five new positions, including mine as General Counsel, with a budget of approximately $770 million, moving closer to the "B" mark.

In regard to monitoring, North Dakota requires meters on all water appropriations, except for domestic use. Non-compliance results in an order to install a meter or permit revocation. The state also has about 800 presence units statewide, with 650 monitoring real-time groundwater levels, 80 monitoring surface water, and others tracking precipitation and soil moisture. Many units have multiple sensors, significantly aiding data collection, especially in remote areas.

During the legislative session, the Atmospheric Resources Board and the Board of Water Well Contractors were dissolved, with their functions integrated into the ND DWR. The Department now reports to two interim committees (including the AG Committee) due to an increase in authorized water projects and studies.

The ND DWR is actively involved in five or six studies. One significant study, in which this group has been involved, examines a potential shift from managing water based on political boundaries to watersheds, following a prior DWR study and current legislative interest. Additionally, two major studies were authorized: (1) focuses on the cost-share program, particularly in light of anticipated decreased revenue from oil and gas taxes (due to "stripper wells" producing less), which fund water projects. An outside consultant has been hired to prioritize long-term project needs as income dwindles; and (2) the study, conducted by the same consultant, will evaluate the governance structures of major regional water systems, including the state-owned and operated Northwest Area Pipeline, the authority-managed Southwest system, and the proposed Red River Valley Water Supply. The goal is to identify the most effective governance model among these diverse systems.

South Dakota: Nakaila Steen reported that the State experienced minimal snowfall last year but has had continuous rain since June, significantly reducing drought conditions across the state, particularly in the Black Hills.

A recent update to the Black Hills hydrologic study, which analyzes bedrock aquifer budgets in western South Dakota, has caused concern regarding the Madison aquifer in the Rapid City area due to perceived over-appropriation. The study divides the Black Hills into nine "sub-areas," not based on groundwater divides but on even distribution. Recharge mechanisms accounted for in the study were limited to precipitation on exposed outcrops and streamflow recharge, leading to conclusions of over-appropriation in some sub-areas for certain bedrock aquifers. From a water management perspective, the state analyzes aquifers in their entirety, and observation of well data in these areas show stable or rising aquifer levels, with many Madison wells exhibiting hundreds of feet of artesian head pressure. While South Dakota is an anti-groundwater mining state and does not issue water rights where discharge exceeds known recharge, they acknowledge the study's limited recharge parameters and view the update more as a political and public perception issue, requiring increased public education.

A water permit application, for which a technical report was completed nearly three years ago, was recently approved by the Supreme Court in the state's favor.

Lastly, the state is looking to optimize its streamgage network by creating a priority list and engaging stakeholders to secure cost-share contributions for USGS efforts.

Montana: Anna Pakenham Stevenson reported that the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MT DNRC) and the Water Resources Division has completed the examination of all claims for the state water adjudication, a major milestone after nearly 50 years. The Water Court is now issuing final decrees, and basins are nearing full adjudication.

Regarding floodplain and dam safety, Montana is contending with delays in FEMA's Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and cooperative technical partnerships. The state is seeking ways to retain floodplain staff without layoffs. On a positive note, dedicated state funding is now in place to support private dam safety inspections, and a trust similar to Wyoming's has been established for the state's 22 dams and reservoirs to address infrastructure funding deficits.

Last session, the Water Resources Division also gained 13 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Montana is significantly behind other states in water metering and reporting, an issue that will be addressed in upcoming legislative sessions to improve water management. Some key bills passed last session that include protection against forfeiture and abandonment through drought plans and a method to merge water rights that have gone through both adjudication and water rights processes into a single certificate. An attempt to pass a bill similar to Idaho's on exempt wells failed, and new litigation on the constitutionality of exempt wells in Montana is anticipated.

Montana funded a statewide Open ET initiative two sessions ago and is on the verge of hindcasting historical consumptive use. Additionally, funding was secured in the last two sessions to expand the state stream gage program to 100 gages, ensuring coverage where USGS funding is absent.

Montana's budget process involves a "rainy day fund" where any delta between projected and actual state income, based on a biennial budget, goes into a broader state trust. This trust is then distributed, with an estimated $5-10 million annually allocated to the infrastructure trust for state water projects.

Washington: Ria Berns provided updates on drought, adjudication, and budget. Washington State is experiencing a historic drought, with the Yakima Basin recording its lowest reservoir levels ever. The state is preparing to curtail 19, 1860s-era water users next week for the first time, an effort complicated by intermingled natural flow and reservoir storage rights. This curtailment will primarily manage water for the Yakima Nation's Wapato irrigation project, which holds 1850-era water rights. Drought conditions persist elsewhere, with the Spokane River experiencing a dry spell partly due to Avista's management of Coeur d'Alene Lake and hydropower operations. While flows have returned, parts of the state face a third consecutive drought year, with preparations underway for potential drought next year.

On the adjudication front, Washington is engaged in two general stream adjudications. One in northwestern Washington, covering the Nooksack watershed near the Canadian border, involved mailing 30,000 summons to all water users, including permit-exempt users. This endeavor highlighted limitations in the state's adjudication code, leading to efforts to streamline the process

and reduce the state's burden. Washington reviewed Utah and Arizona's streamlined processes and is pursuing legislation to advance adjudication efforts before filing in the upper Columbia area of northeastern Washington.

Budget-wise, Washington State's Department of Ecology's Water Resources Program, funded entirely by the general fund, faces significant shortfalls. The program saw a 4.5% reduction in the last fiscal year and anticipates an additional 3% reduction in the supplemental budget cycle. These reductions will significantly impact decision-making and the ability to fulfill core missions, although they are also being used as an opportunity to streamline and consolidate efforts.

Wyoming: Jennifer Zygmunt talked about the Class VI Carbon Sequestration Program, which remains a priority, with nine wells permitted for construction, three already built, and the first well recently starting injection. An additional 25-30 wells are anticipated.

Yellowstone has been deemed an exclusive federal jurisdiction, transferring Clean Water Act authority to the EPA after Wyoming's 50 years of implementation. We appreciate Region 8's support in working to regain authority. We are pursuing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Department of the Interior for concurrent jurisdiction, and I hope to report on its progress in April. This effort aims to preserve the status quo for administrative purposes and, critically, for environmental protection of the park's waters.

We are nearing the issuance of a statewide dredge and fill general permit to ensure all waters of the state, including non-WOTUS waters, are protected. This is being issued under our point source discharge permitting program without requiring new statutory or regulatory authority.

Oklahoma: Robert Singletary mentioned some leadership changes. Shelley Chard, Water Quality Director (16 years), is retiring next month after a 35-year career. George Russell from Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has been appointed as her replacement. One of our water quality attorneys will soon graduate from the Water Leadership Institute, which is crucial for developing future leaders given the upcoming retirements.

Our first EPA-approved update to the Water Quality Standards since their transfer to DEQ has been completed, and our first triennial review will be finalized this year. We secured three new FTEs from the legislature to implement EPA's Lead and Copper Rule revisions. We are utilizing DWSF set-aside funds to partner with the rural water association for more extensive monitoring across different systems. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in biosolids is re-igniting discussions regarding land application, particularly from large municipalities in rural areas. While odor was previously the main concern (outside our jurisdiction), EPA's draft risk assessment on biosolids and PFAS has intensified the debate. Various interim legislative studies are underway, with past bills seeking to eliminate land application. This is a significant issue, affecting over 700 facilities that currently land apply biosolids.

We are collaborating with the Choctaw Nation on operator certification training statewide.

The legislature allocated $1 million for a study of the Blue River, an outstanding quality water body, due to recent attention and gravel mining activities. The study is just beginning. Oklahoma is experiencing a significant influx of data center permit applications, presenting challenges related to water usage and air quality. New legislation allowing behind-the-meter power generation for these facilities is leading to the construction of large private power plants, impacting air quality.

Joaquin appreciated Robert's insights on PFAS, noting California's recent testing of disadvantaged communities' wells for PFAS. A key question raised was whether states are using multiple testing methods, including total organic fluorine, to understand the full extent of contamination, or if testing is more targeted to known PFAS. Robert confirmed their testing is focused on primary, known PFAS.

Joaquin highlighted a significant finding: Trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) (a type of PFAS) is prevalent, and its widespread presence is an increasing concern, though the extent of contamination was not as severe as initially feared. Robert added that while initial worries were high, PFAS is still being found in unexpected "pockets," necessitating further investigation. Encouragingly, less than 10% of their systems show any detections.

On the topic of workforce development, Joaquin proposed a general idea for consideration among all Western states: improving the interoperability of wastewater and drinking water operator certifications. Given the similar water management challenges across the West, creating reciprocity between state certifications could significantly benefit the sector by making it easier for professionals to move and work in different states. Robert supported this idea, especially in light of the aging workforce and upcoming retirements, emphasizing the need for strategies to support the sector. Speaker 2 noted that their state already offers certification reciprocity for professionals from California.

Julie provided an update on Oklahoma's finalized 10-year comprehensive water plan, a statutorily required update. A significant need for new talent exists in the operator system and well-drilling communities due to an aging workforce. Oklahoma has reciprocity with other states but lacks a standardized training program for water operators.

The water plan includes four key recommendation areas. Oklahoma has identified a need for $24 billion in infrastructure, encompassing water, wastewater, water reclamation, and flood control projects. A useful map server links projects to legislative districts, effectively garnering legislative interest and support for water financing. Last year, $650 million in ARPA funding was approved, with most directed toward water and wastewater projects. The state is also exploring establishing an ongoing water fund, similar to Texas, and is conducting lake assessments for capacity issues while promoting voluntary conservation in agriculture. A recently refocused drought commission has been well-received, and efforts are underway to secure more permanent funding for agricultural infrastructure and their successful cost-share program.

Oklahoma is strengthening its statewide water monitoring network, including its stream gauge network and the Oklahoma HydroNet, which integrates meteorological, soil moisture, and

water monitoring data for streams, lakes, and groundwater. They are interested in learning about successful water data strategies from others.

While not currently required, legislative discussions around metering have occurred. Demonstrating the decline in aquifer levels, particularly in western Oklahoma, could drive this initiative.

Roger inquired if the water projects by district were underway or still in the needs assessment phase. Julie clarified that these represent identified needs, similar to the EPA needs survey but with more robust data. There's no requirement for engineering completion, but the map server allows users to click on a city to see project details and preliminary cost estimates.

Regarding the map server, Roger asked if it covered congressional or state-level districts. Julie believes it's state-level but confirmed that a congressional layer could be added, as it's a GIS map server. She also mentioned an ongoing map server tracking over $8 billion in infrastructure funding, financing, and grants, including ARPA projects. This server allows users to toggle layers and also tracks savings across eight infrastructure programs, noting costs and the resulting savings, which is a valuable metric.

Joaquin asked for clarification on how savings are quantified, specifically whether they relate to low-interest loans and if they are high-level numbers or specific to customer rates. He noted that capturing and communicating the value of these critical affordability programs has been a challenge. Julie explained that they do not quantify savings in terms of rate reductions, as rate increases are often necessary. However, they do quantify high-level savings by looking at overall borrowing capacity. She highlighted the benefit of their AAA rating, which allows even large cities to choose their program due to reduced costs and security requirements. This structure enables larger communities to secure the entire program, offering smaller borrowers access to AAA-rated, low-interest rates, which is crucial in bridging the gap between large and small communities.

Joaquin added that they lend at half the bond rate and are in discussions with larger agencies that might pay slightly more interest to grow the fund, while still receiving a good deal compared to the bond market, where their costs are higher.

Julie also highlighted the low administrative costs, as interest earnings are used to administer these programs and other small grant programs. She offered to discuss this further.

Roger suggested a passive learning system where communities could see how past projects (e.g., Oklahoma City's five years ago) were funded and how different sources were cobbled together. This would help communities like Tulsa identify potential funding sources.

Julie believes that most people are generally aware of their small system grant programs, which have existed for a long time. She mentioned that with ARPA and other initiatives, they have created programs like the tribal match program, which has received $72 million over several sessions and requires a 50/50 match by the state and the tribe. She feels the word is getting out, and Rob noted

that they are actively collaborating with others on technical assistance to publicize funding availability.

Sara Gibson mentioned that their website does not specify if projects are water or wastewater related. In Oklahoma, they have a FACT Team (Funding Assistance Council), which includes every federal and state agency in Oklahoma that provides infrastructure funding, including for tribes. Agencies can apply, present their projects, and have them evaluated based on various criteria.

Colorado: Lauren Ris reported that Colorado is experiencing significant drought conditions, with about half the state affected and roughly a third in exceptional drought, particularly in the San Luis Valley. The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is heavily focused on Colorado River issues, including ongoing negotiations. We recently launched coloradoriver.com as a resource for information on the river and the importance of these discussions. Jason Ullmann, our State Engineer, announced plans to begin a broad public outreach effort on potential water measurement regulations for the Colorado River by next spring.

Unfortunately, our Colorado Parks and Wildlife Agency detected adult zebra mussels in the Colorado River between Grand Junction and the Utah border. This is concerning, as previous larval stage detections have been noted since mid-2024, and Colorado has largely avoided zebra mussel infestations until now.

In more positive news, we've seen record-breaking funding for water projects through sports betting tax revenue. Projections indicate we'll receive about $68 million in the next couple of years, up from $8 million in 2019. This is excellent for our agency's grant funding efforts statewide. While Colorado has faced a budget crisis, our water funding has not been directly impacted, and we hope to maintain this support in the upcoming legislative session.

Finally, Jojo La, our WSWC member for water quality, has moved to a new position. Our Department of Public Health and Environment is working to fill this role, so we anticipate a water quality update at the next meeting.

Nebraska: Jesse Bradley discussed the Department of Environment and Energy and the Department of Natural Resources merging in July into a single agency, which is expected to streamline water management, particularly in collaborating with local Natural Resource Districts (NRDs) on groundwater quantity and quality. The new agency aims to integrate water quality management into existing comprehensive planning processes with NRDs, moving beyond traditional CWA §319 Non-Point Source planning.

Nebraska is working under a reduced budget, aiming for a 10% reduction over the next two years. The agency merger has been beneficial in this context, offering flexibility to adjust budgets and consolidate functions for increased efficiency.

A 20-member task force, comprising NRD partners, agricultural producers, industry representatives, and municipal interests, has been established to address water quality and quantity

statewide. Unlike academic-focused groups, this task force is broadly representative of water users. It has formed four subcommittees: Financing and Incentives; Nitrate, Legacy, and Drinking Water Access; Water Conservation and Quantity Management; and Methods and Resources. These subcommittees have developed 11 goals, which will be further refined into near-term, mid-term, and long-term objectives with measurable metrics.

EPA Grant and Carbon Intensity Registry - this initiative aligns with an EPA grant focused on greenhouse gas emission reductions. The grant connects agricultural greenhouse gas reductions with improvements in water quantity management, water quality, and soil health. It will lead to the development of a carbon intensity registry, allowing producers to enroll and access approximately $150 million in incentive programs over the next three years.

Nebraska is leveraging a converted natural gas pipeline for carbon sequestration, which currently terminates in Wyoming. This project is significant for Nebraska's ethanol industry, the second-leading producer in the U.S., as it allows ethanol to become nearly carbon neutral. The first CO2 loading occurred recently, and about half of the state's 24 ethanol producers (responsible for over 2 billion gallons annually) will connect to this pipeline.

In July, Nebraska sought permission from the United States Supreme Court to proceed with interstate litigation regarding the South Platte River. Nebraska's briefing and complaint have been filed, and Colorado's filing is expected by mid-October. The process will then await the Solicitor's Office's input and the Court's decision on jurisdiction.

Arizona: Trent Blomberg highlighted challenges in data collection, including issues with USGS streamgages, groundwater monitoring, and state-level budgets. Despite a slight budget increase last year, future challenges are anticipated.

A significant new program, "Ag to Urban," became effective today. This program, passed by the state legislature, facilitates the voluntary conversion of high-water-use agricultural lands to lower-water-use developments (housing and commercial) in the Phoenix metro area and south of the valley. Farmers can relinquish irrigation rights in exchange for developing or selling their land. This initiative could potentially save up to 7 million acre-feet of groundwater over the next 100 years.

Additionally, a new Active Management Area (AMA) was established last fall in the Wilcox area of southeast Arizona, a highly agricultural region experiencing steep declines in groundwater levels and subsidence. Our staff is currently working with residents, farmers, and stakeholders to develop a management goal and plan that will guide conservation programs and help balance aquifer recharge and outflows.

Finally, we are actively engaged in negotiations for post-2026 operations for the Colorado River, with Tom Buschatzke, Arizona Department of Water Resources Director, serving as the lead negotiator. We continue to contribute to conservation efforts for the river and are pleased with Andrea Travnicek's confirmation for Interior, especially given her expected involvement in post-2026 operations.

Mark inquired about who the farmers relinquish the water to and whether they are prohibited from developing without following the program.

Trent responded that within the AMAs, including the Phoenix area, farmers currently have irrigation rights to pump groundwater. To be eligible for this new program, they must relinquish that right. Upon relinquishing the right, they receive credits for home building, which they will likely sell along with the land to housing developers.

Regarding the second part of Mark's question, Arizona's Assured Water Supply program requires new homes in AMAs to demonstrate 100 years of assured water supply (legally, physically, and continuously available, meeting water quality standards). Due to recent groundwater modeling showing that withdrawals exceed recharge in the Phoenix area, a pause has been placed on new housing developments solely reliant on groundwater. This "Ag to Urban" program provides an exemption from the 100-year assured water supply requirement by demonstrating significant water savings (e.g., converting from six acre-feet to one acre-foot per acre). The program aims to protect the aquifer while allowing for the conversion of agricultural lands that farmers may no longer wish to maintain.

SUNSETTING POSTIONS FOR 2025 SUMMER MEETINGS

Tab XYZ of the briefing materials contains sunsetting positions (#490 - #503) for the 2026 Spring meetings. Please review them and get any proposed changes to staff.

OTHER MATTERS

Below is a summary of the key takeaways and action items from J.D.'s wrap-up of the recent meeting.

First, he extended a huge thank you to California for hosting us. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the experience, from the incredible field trip to the insightful groundwater workshop. It was the perfect setting to discuss aquifer recharge, direct potable reuse, and other topics vital to many states.

We also extend our sincerest gratitude to our staff, especially Michelle and Elysse, for their phenomenal work in organizing this meeting. Their efforts were particularly commendable given the ongoing organizational transition, the NARF Symposium, and the planning for the fall meeting. Michelle, a well-deserved week off is coming your way!

The meeting was highly productive, and we appreciate everyone's hands-on approach to driving the organization forward during this transition, aiming for "Western States Water Council 2.0," as Julie dubbed it.

Here are the main action items:

Strategic Plan: We aim to circulate a draft "straw man" version of the strategic plan to the full membership by the end of October. We ask that you route your comments and input through your executive committee member. The Executive Committee will reconvene in November/December (possibly around the Bismarck meeting) to finalize the plan for 2026 implementation.

Future Meetings: Starting in 2026, we will adopt a new meeting cadence: two in-person meetings and one virtual meeting. The DC Roundtable is already planned for April. Look for a "summer series" virtual meeting, broken into smaller segments to avoid long screen times. The Fall in-person meeting is tentatively planned for Oregon.

Wade, WestCAT and WestDAAT: Keeping WestCAT unplugged. An ad hoc committee will be formed to discuss the transition plan for WaDE and its associated WestDAAT. Please let us know if you'd like to volunteer for this committee, or we will send out a solicitation.

Budget and Finances: We will continue refining the budget with the goal of presenting a final budget picture to the Executive Committee, addressing all questions. Candice has done an exceptional job managing the budget, and we appreciate her hard work.

Sunsetting Positions: Staff will review the sunsetting positions, particularly those related to Water Resources, to explore consolidating them into more omnibus roles, similar to what was achieved at this meeting.

Water Resources Committee: We will be reaching out to the Water Resources Committee to vet any changes to the sunsetting positions.

Water Quality Committee: We will contact the Water Quality Committee in the last two weeks of October to schedule a call to develop a new position on cooperative federalism, specifically regarding Clean Water Act water quality.

As Julie mentioned, there are endless possibilities with all the input received, and we are excited to move forward in the direction we all desire.

Safe travels to everyone!

There being no other matters, the Full Council Meeting was adjourned.