

WestFAST

Western States Federal Agency Support Team

2026-2027 Work Plan

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.

- An excerpt from the *Declaration of Cooperation*, 2008

1.0 Introduction

The Western States Water Council (WSWC) is a government entity consisting of representatives appointed by the governors of eighteen Western States. The mission of the WSWC is to ensure the West has an adequate, secure and sustainable supply of water of suitable quality to meet its diverse economic and environmental needs now and in the future.

Since the WSWC was created by the governors, and since the members serve at their respective governors' pleasure, the Council is accountable to the Western Governors' Association (WGA).

In 2008, the Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) was formally organized in response to the WGA's 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.

WestFAST brings together water policy experts and managers from fourteen federal agencies, along with senior-level Principals (e.g., political appointees, senior career staff, SES) designated by each agency (see Section 4.0 for Member Agencies and contact details). In addition, WestFAST agencies support a federal liaison who works directly with the WSWC. Working in partnership with the WSWC, WestFAST focuses on issues related to the

conservation, development, and management of water resources. This collaborative team of federal water resources experts provides a flexible platform for engagement with the WSWC, individual states, or the federal government. Through this collaboration, WestFAST has fostered valuable cross-agency dialogue and leveraged shared expertise to address complex water resource challenges.

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 together and with the WSWC in ways that may not otherwise take place. This Work Plan is a living document that can be altered as needed to reflect changes in Western States' and WestFAST member agencies' programs and needs. From the outset, WestFAST has focused on collaboration around Extreme Weather Events, Water Availability, Water Use, Water Reuse, and Water Quality. Following are specific topics that WestFAST will intentionally address over the next two years, but other activities may be added as needs arise.

Focal Areas for 2026-2027 include:

- Actions Addressing WSWC 2026 Strategic Priorities
 - o Build durable working connections and strengthen technical engagement between WestFAST and WSWC members
 - o Hold two or more technical touchpoints per year with WSWC members and/or their staffs (e.g., staff-to-staff clinics, technical roundtables, webinars)
 - o Provide WestFAST contacts for 3-5 WSWC ad-hoc task groups each year as requested

- Continuity of WestFAST and its relationship with WSWC
 - o Planning and Facilitating a WestFAST Principals Meeting in April 2026 in Washington, DC
 - o Support for critical federal water data programs

- Summary of WSWC members' challenges with Endangered Species Act processes

- The Water - Energy Nexus

3.0 Areas of Coordination and Collaboration

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

1. Communication and Outreach

2. Cross-Agency Coordination Activities
3. State-Federal Partnerships
4. Western Water Data

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

3.1 Communication and Outreach

WestFAST agencies have many priorities 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:

- Continue weekly Executive Committee and WSWC staff meetings.
- Hold monthly team calls.
- Participate in WSWC workgroups and committees to address priority issues.
- Produce a quarterly newsletter sharing high profile accomplishments, descriptions of new water-related programs and policies, upcoming meetings, and funding opportunities.
- Host at least three informational meetings, clinics, roundtables, and/or webinars on topics of interest to Western States.
- Maintain and enhance the WestFAST website with current WestFAST activities, events, and updates on WestFAST collaborative efforts and archived materials.
- 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 Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, CO River Basin Salinity Control Forum).

3.2 Cross-Agency Coordination Activities

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

- Support the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS).
- Assist with WSWC Workshops (e.g., 2025 Groundwater Workshop).
- Coordinate with federal, state, and other related organizations to work on improving watershed monitoring and both short-term and sub-seasonal to seasonal (S2S) forecasting improvements that will help organizations assess drought conditions, identify the possible end or onset of drought for more effective responses, better anticipate high flood risk conditions to enhance emergency preparedness and response, and for improved FIRO and FIRO-like reservoir management.

- Facilitate WestFAST Principals meetings to discuss future coordination related to federal programs and policies that affect water resources in the Western U.S.
- Engage and work with the Western Regional Partnership , 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 U. S.
- Connect WestFAST member agencies’ senior leadership with WSWC member states on water policy issues of concern.
- Identify and nominate, as appropriate, additional agencies with water resource responsibilities in the Western States as WestFAST member agencies.

3.3 State-Federal Partnerships

Relationship-building with State water agencies through WestFAST provides points of contact for informal connections and supports the WSWC’s goal of developing “integrated collaborative, and grassroots” approaches and greater partnership among state, local, and federal agencies to find optimal solutions to the increasing challenges associated with water management in the West. To facilitate this, WestFAST will continue to:

- Identify opportunities to work with Western States to coordinate federal funding connected with state planning for disasters, water resources, forestry, fish and wildlife, infrastructure, and other related processes.
- Serve as a forum to discuss notable water management developments as they arise.
- Promote federal and state collaboration in major river basins in the West, where appropriate.
- Provide information to WSWC regarding initiatives of interest (e.g. to map evapotranspiration and consumptive use, indicators of water quality, land subsidence, groundwater depletion, drought impacts and land fallowing, and snow water resources).
- WSWC and the California Department of Water Resources have entered into a number of agreements to assist with efforts to improve S2S forecasting skill. WestFAST will continue coordination and collaboration to assist with S2S workshops into the future.
- WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on activities, ongoing developments, and positions regarding the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member states informed and updated on member agencies’ initiatives, like EPA’s efforts involving nutrients including Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs/EPA cyanotoxin criteria), and NASA’s new missions and product innovations including NISAR, GRACE, OPERA, PACE, and SWOT for monitoring snowpack, precipitation, groundwater, soil moisture, surface water, land use/land cover, fire impacts, and water quality.
- WestFAST will keep state partners abreast of any new water relevant geospatial datasets and tools from federal member agencies that can enhance water resources monitoring and management.
- 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.

- WestFAST will continue to work with the WSWC and its member states on WRDA and Corps related issues, as needed.
- WestFAST will continue working with the Federal Non-Tribal Water Claims Subcommittee to evaluate ways the WSWC and WestFAST can improve the effective resolution of federal non-tribal water rights claims; and will continue to support the WSWC in defining best practices for addressing non-tribal federal reserved water rights and groundwater protection initiatives.
- WestFAST will continue to keep the WSWC and its member States informed and updated on activities regarding the participation of the federal government in State administrative and judicial water rights proceedings, including general stream adjudications conducted in accordance with the McCarran Amendment (43 U.S.C. 666).

3.4 Western Water Data

- 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 Earth Observation missions including 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.
- WestFAST will continue working with NASA to integrate satellite Earth observations with federal, state, and tribal monitoring networks to enhance the reliability and usability of Western water data. Efforts may include facilitating the validation of NASA data products using operational datasets, addressing data uncertainty, and promoting data interoperability across agencies. This includes 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 in water resource and water hazard management; (2) Transition new technologies and information products for water resources and water hazard management to operational federal programs, including, but not limited to, remote sensing-based measurement technologies and S2S weather and remote sensing-informed stream and reservoir inflow forecasting; and (3) Develop, implement, and grow a strategy for raising awareness and support within state and federal government for both research to operations and co-developed innovation.

4.0 WestFAST Agencies/Members

<https://westernstateswater.org/westfast-members/>

WestFAST WSWC LIAISON

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