



The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 11 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council (WSWC), and the Western Governors Association (WGA) in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.

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USFS Releases Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for New Forest Planning Rule

January 26, 2012

The U.S. Forest Service Released a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) as part of the process of finalizing its Forest Planning Rule. The USFS now has 30 days to choose a final alternative for the planning rule.

The USFS has been in the process of finalizing the rule since May 2011 after the close of the comment period on the proposed rule. The USFS received nearly 300,000 public comments on the proposed rule and the draft EIS (which was released February 2011).

Plans developed under the new USFS Planning Rule will define how lands within the National Forest System are managed. Plans are required under the National Forest Management Act, and this rule will replace prior planning rules. The preferred alternative described in the PEIS requires forest plans to include components to restore and maintain forests and grasslands; maintain or restore watersheds, water resources, water quality (including drinking water), and the ecological integrity of riparian areas; provide habitat for plant and animal diversity; provide for multiple uses (including recreation, timber, range, watershed, wildlife, and fish); provide for sustainable recreation; encourage public involvement; use the best available science; extensive monitoring; and implementing adaptive management processes to adjust to changing conditions.

"We value the input we have received from the public throughout this process," said Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Harris Sherman. "This preferred alternative is a positive framework that will allow the Forest Service to more effectively restore our natural resources, support the economy, and adapt to changing conditions."

For more information, see the [news release](#).



EPA Releases 2010-2011 Highlights of Progress Implementing the National Water Program Climate Change Strategy

January 26, 2012

EPA released its third progress report, highlighting accomplishments of the National Water Program in 2010 and 2011 related to its Climate Change Strategy. Some of the highlights include:

- Continued Implementation of EPA's [WaterSense](#) Program.
- [Green Infrastructure/Green Buildings](#)
- [Water Reuse](#)
- [Climate Ready Utilities](#)
- [Climate Ready Estuaries](#)
- [Climate/Water Research](#)
- Encouraging Wastewater Facilities to Consider the Impacts of Extreme Weather Events (EPA Region 8)
- Improving Communication on Water [Recycling](#) (EPA Region 9)
- Participating in the [Landscape Conservation Cooperatives](#) (EPA Region 10)

[The National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change](#), published in September 2008, was an initial effort to describe climate change impacts on water programs, define goals and objectives for responding to climate change, and identify a set of key actions that could be undertaken in 2008 and 2009 under level resources. The strategy was organized into five areas: mitigation, adaptation, research, education, and management.

To see the full report see: <http://water.epa.gov/scitech/climatechange/implementation.cfm>

USDA Announces Disaster Assistance to Produces and Communities in 33 States and Puerto Rico

January 18, 2012

After a year in which a wave of natural disasters swept across the country, the USDA is providing \$308 million for financial and technical assistance to help rebuild and repair land damaged on account of flooding, drought, tornadoes and other natural disasters. This funding is being made available through the NRCS's Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) as well as the Farm Service Agency's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP).

Of the \$308 million available under this program, western states are estimated to receive approximately \$108 million, with most of the resources going to flood damages as well as a large portion going to damages related to wild fires in Texas. For more information see the [news release](#).

National Strategy Proposed to Respond to Climate Change's Impacts on Fish, Wildlife, and Plants

January 19, 2012

In partnership with state, tribal, and federal agency partners, the Obama Administration released the first draft national strategy to help decision makers and resource managers prepare for and help reduce the impacts of climate change on species, ecosystems, and the people and economies that depend on them.

The draft National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy, available for public review and comment through March 5, 2012, can be found on the web at www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov.

Leading the development of the strategy is a Steering Committee that includes government representatives from 16 federal agencies, five state fish and wildlife agencies and two inter-tribal commissions. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is providing staff support for developing the strategy. For more information, see the [news release](#).

Agency Announcements

January 5, 2012: Secretary Vilsack (USDA) Announces Opportunity to Advise Land Management Planning, see [news release](#).

January 9, 2012: EPA Releases Recovery Potential Website, see [website](#).

January 9, 2012: High Resolution OrbView—3 Images Available from the USGS, see [news release](#).

January 10, 2012: Secretary Salazar (DOI) Announces Decision to Withdraw Public Lands Near Grand Canyon from New Mining Claims, see [news release](#).

January 12, 2012: NASA Cold Weather Airborne Campaign to Measure Falling Snow, see [news release](#).

January 13, 2012: BLM to Use State, Regional Data in Identifying Wildlife Corridors, Crucial Habitat, see [news release](#).

January 13, 2012: USDA Announces \$10 Million Available for Funding Water Quality Markets, see [news release](#).

January 18, 2012: Reclamation and NRCS Provide Funding Opportunity for Water Conservation, see [news release](#).

January 20, 2012: USDA Awards Research Grants to Ensure the Sustainability and Quality of America's Water Supply, see [news release](#).

January 24, 2012: Interior Issues Draft Overview Report on Klamath Dam Removal Studies, see [news release](#).

January 26, 2012: BLM Seeks Nominations to Resource Advisory Councils, see [news release](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- **February 8-9, 2012:** [USGS/ICWP/WSWC Cooperative Water Program Data and Science Roundtable](#), Salt Lake City, UT
- **March 13-16, 2012:** [Spring ICWP/WSWC meeting](#), Washington, DC
- **April 30-May 4, 2012:** [National Monitoring Conference—Water: One Shared Effort—Common Future](#), Portland, Oregon



WestFAST News is published monthly. To get an Agency Announcement published or to get added to the WestFAST News distribution list contact:
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