



Western States Water

Addressing Water Needs and Strategies for a Sustainable Future

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ADMINISTRATION

Bureau of Reclamation/WestFAST

On November 18, Daniel Staton presented a WestFAST webinar on the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) Transportation Program. USBR owns 2800 miles of roadways and 300 dams with roads, with roughly two-thirds managed and operated by outside partners. The program provides the necessary resources to ensure those roads are safe, maintained, and usable for public and federal purposes, including access to Reclamation water projects and facilities.

The Transportation Program has two primary funding mechanisms, the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). FLTP funds may be used for eligible construction and rehabilitation projects, owned or maintained by Reclamation and open to the public. FLTP can fund 100% of the project, and there is typically around \$7.5M available per year, which can be combined with FLTP funds available to other federal agencies for roads that benefit multiple agencies. FLAP is issued to non-federal partners, and requires a 5-20% match. FLTP funds can be used for the match. The Federal Highway Administration allocates FLAP funding, but Reclamation is on the Technical Advisory Committee that helps to prioritize projects. FLAP issued \$29M across all agencies in FY19. USBR is working to improve awareness of these programs and communication with partners to coordinate and leverage funds.

Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) funds are available for eligible roads damaged by natural disasters or catastrophic failure. These funds typically reimburse any emergency work, so thorough documentation is required. To date, only two Reclamation projects have applied for and received ERFO funds.

The Federal Land Planning Program is developing bridge and road condition inventories, with field assessments and estimated costs of repairs. While not yet publicly available, these inventories will be shared with partners to help develop project proposals and prioritize projects based on size and need. <https://www.westernstateswater.org/westfast/westfast-webinars>

CONGRESS

Elections/House of Representatives

In races for the House of Representatives, there are 21 new members across western states with two races in California still undecided. New representatives include Jay Obernolte (R-CA), Young Kim (R-CA), Michelle Steel (R-CA), Laruen Boebert (R-CO), Tracey Mann (R-KS), Jake LaTurner (R-KS), Matt Rosendale (R-MT), Yvette Herrell (R-NM), Teresa Leger Fernandez (R-NM), Stephanie Bice (R-OK), Cliff Bentz (R-OR), Pat Fallon (R-TX), August Pfluger (R-TX), Ronny Jackson (R-TX), Pete Sessions (R-TX), Troy Nehls (R-TX), Tony Gonzales (R-TX), Beth Van Duyne (R-TX), Blake Moore (R-UT), Burgess Owens (R-UT) and Marilyn Strickland (D-WA).

Democrats will retain control of the House of Representatives, with their current count at 220 compared to 204 for the Republicans. Parties need 219 members to control the House.

Two senior House leaders are leaving. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), House Assistant Speaker, is now the Senator-elect to replace retiring Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM). Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, is retiring after 18 years.

WATER RESOURCES

South Dakota/Infrastructure

On November 5, the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources approved 55 water projects from 36 municipalities and water systems for inclusion in the 2021 State Water Plan. All water projects that require state funding or need state support for categorical grant or loan funding, including federal State Revolving Funds (SRFs), must be in the State Water Plan. Several projects were included in the previous plan but were set to expire at the end of this year. The new applications and renewed projects approved this year will remain in the plan through December 2022. Approval by the board is a pre-requisite, but does not guarantee funding will be available. Projects may be funded in phases.

Projects include improvements, expansion, and replacement of infrastructure for wastewater treatment

facilities, sewer systems, stormwater drainage, public water supply, and drinking water. There are also projects to reduce nutrients and address harmful algal blooms, landfill construction to protect groundwater, and automated water meter installation to better monitor system leaks. <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/uploads/BWNR1120pkt.pdf>

WATER RESOURCES/ENERGY

Klamath Basin/Dam Removal

On November 17, Governor Gavin Newsom (D-CA), Governor Kate Brown (D-OR), leaders of the Yurok and Karuk tribes, and PacifiCorp signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that “provide[s] additional resources and support to advance the most ambitious salmon restoration effort in history.” The MOA amends the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSa), negotiated in 2016, which sets the terms for the removal of the four lower Klamath River dams by the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRc). In July 2020, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) only partially approved the permit needed to begin dam removal, citing concerns with the removal of PacifiCorp as a co-licensee and placing full responsibility onto KRRc for any cost overruns or liability (see WSW #2411). The new MOA instead specifies that all parties jointly ask FERC to approve the transfer of the license to California, Oregon, and KRRc to alleviate these concerns. The MOA keeps KRRc as the dam removal entity; expresses commitment to dam removal; doubles the contingency funds held by the KRRc and allocates any additional costs equally to California, Oregon and PacifiCorp; aims to begin dam removal by 2022; and retains liability protections for PacifiCorp customers negotiated in the KHSa.

Newsom said: “The Klamath River is a centerpiece of tribal community, culture and sustenance and a national ecological treasure. With this agreement, we are closer than ever to restoring access to 400 miles of salmon habitat which will be a boon to the local economy.... When we work together, we can build a better, more inclusive future for all.” Brown said: “This is an incredibly important step forward on the path towards restorative justice for the people of the Klamath Basin, and towards restoring health to the river as well as everyone and everything that depends on it.... In Oregon, the Klamath tribes remember a time when their livelihoods were supported by clean, healthy and vibrant water. It is that vision, that promise, that we are working towards restoring for the generations to come.”

FERC will need to approve the transfer of the license to KRRc and the states from PacifiCorp as well as the dam removal plan prior to any work commencing. <http://www.klamathrenewal.org/bi-state-agreement-wit-h-klamath-dam-owner-advances-historic-salmon-restoration-plan/>

WATER RESOURCES/MEETINGS

Kansas/Governor’s Conference

On November 10-11, the Kansas Water Office hosted the ninth annual Governor’s Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas. Surface water topics included the status of Kansas water quality, aquatic nuisance species, and developing a multi-use restoration plan for streams. Groundwater presentations discussed programs for an alluvial aquifer index well program and a certified irrigator program. Water infrastructure topics included community affordability and small water systems, urban tree cover impacts on stormwater management, and financing infrastructure now while interest rates are at a historic low. Research topics included a pilot project on treating produced water for beneficial reuse, water-optimized sorghum varieties, and technical and other solutions to declining agricultural resources.

Recorded presentations are available at <https://www.kwo.ks.gov/news-events/governor-s-water-conference/2020-governor-s-conference-presentations>.

NOAA/DOE/S2S Forecasting

On November 30-December 2, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Department of Energy (DOE) will co-host a workshop on Precipitation Processes and Predictability. The workshop will bring together observational, modeling, and research communities to address the following questions: (1) What sources of predictability have the biggest influence on precipitation at weather, subseasonal-to-seasonal (S2S), to multi-decadal timescales, including extremes? (2) What key physical processes have the strongest imprint on model biases and precipitation predictions and projections? (3) How can we effectively use existing observations and data (satellite and in-situ) to advance process-level understanding of the key processes and predictability? (4) What gaps in targeted observations and process studies would improve understanding and model representations of those key processes? (5) How can national and international collaboration make significant progress?

Workshop resources available to the public include links to NOAA’s recent 2020 Precipitation Prediction Grand Challenge Strategic Plan, and DOE’s 2018 Earth and Environmental Systems Sciences Division Strategic Plan. NOAA’s Strategic Plan identifies research and steps needed to improve precipitation prediction skill. This effort supports the 2017 Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act requirements for NOAA to collect and utilize information to make more usable, reliable, and timely S2S forecasts of temperature and precipitation. <https://cpo.noaa.gov/News/News-Article/ArticleID/2030/NOAA-DOE-Precipitation-Processes-and-Predictability-Workshop>

The WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL is an organization 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.