



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

SUMMER 2026 VIRTUAL MEETINGS MINUTES

Meeting Summary & Action Record

July 13-16, 2026 | DRAFT FOR MEMBER REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The WSWC's first fully virtual Summer Meetings confirmed that members want less presentation and more state-to-state problem solving. Across eight-member meeting blocks, the Council closed out FY2026, previewed its FY2027 direction, heard state updates, and held focused roundtables on federal-state MOUs, post-Sackett permitting, water data, data centers, and infrastructure. Formal actions included approval of the April 23 meeting minutes, election of FY2027 officers, and adoption of Position #2026-03 on SRF, WIFIA, and STAG. Members also directed that the proposed cooperative federalism position be separated into distinct water-quality and state-water-rights positions for consideration at the Fall Meetings.

Council Actions at a Glance

Action	Outcome
Prior minutes	The April 23, 2026, Washington, D.C. meeting minutes were approved without revision or opposition.
FY2027 officers	Elected Earl Lewis (Kansas), Chair; Candice Hasenyager (Utah), Vice Chair; and Ria Berns (Washington), Secretary-Treasurer.
Policy #2026-03	Adopted "Support for SRFs, WIFIA and State & Tribal Assistance Grants" without opposition.
Federalism policy	Deferred final action and directed staff/member volunteers to develop separate water-quality/cooperative-federalism and state-water-rights positions for Fall consideration.

The Common Thread: State Capacity Stressed

States are confronting more drought, groundwater depletion, development pressure, infrastructure need, and regulatory complexity while federal funding and staffing are waning and state vacancies persist. Members consistently asked WSWC to concentrate on practical follow-through: stronger U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coordination, durable support for federal water-data networks, rapid sharing of state approaches, and focused task groups with clear deliverables and sunset dates.

WESTERN PRIORITIES EMERGING FROM THE MEETINGS

Drought Impacts

Severe drought and declining aquifers are driving curtailments, new management areas, revised drought tools, conjunctive-management decisions, and difficult state-local choices.

Water Data & Forecasting

States need modern data governance and accessible systems, but they also depend on continuous USGS streamgaging and NRCS snow-monitoring records that cannot be rebuilt after cuts.

Data Centers & Reuse

States are testing different legislative and regulatory approaches – from transparency and municipal-supply requirements to advanced reuse rules – while seeking credible information on technology-specific water demand.

Infrastructure Financing

Congressionally directed spending, rural affordability, aging systems, dam-safety needs, and the end of IIJA funding are pushing states toward new revolving loans, grants, fees, bonds, and asset planning.

Post-Sackett Implementation

New and existing state waters laws are filling some gaps, but permittees remain confused about state jurisdiction; states want better Federal (especially Corps) handoffs, regional coordination, and shared state lessons on dredge-and-fill programs and §404 assumption.

Council Modernization

Members supported the strategic plan as the Council-wide work plan, more discussion-centered meetings, accessible online materials, a member forum pilot, purposeful onboarding, and limited task groups tied to measurable outcomes.

What Happens Next

- Prepare two separate federalism policy drafts for consideration in Las Cruces.
- Pilot the member discussion forum first for functionality, then for substantive exchange using Nevada's indoor-cooling reuse proposal as an early test case.
- Compile state-federal MOU examples, including FAST-41 and alternative-dispute-resolution provisions.
- Engage the Corps and WestFAST on post-Sackett jurisdictional handoffs, nationwide permits, and state coordination; explore a Utah §404-assumption webinar.
- Sharpen advocacy around USGS streamgages, NRCS SNOTEL, and other priority monitoring networks; share Utah's water-data modernization study when complete.
- Continue state tracking on data-center legislation/projects and infrastructure-financing approaches; refine the virtual meeting model through a member survey and Zoom fixes.

Why this matters to Governors: The meetings showed the value of a standing forum where western states can compare emerging problems early, identify workable state models, and speak collectively when federal programs or coordination affect state water management.

OFFICIAL MEETING RECORD

SCOPE OF THIS RECORD

This summary covers the eight-member meeting blocks held July 13-16. The invitation-only Executive Committee meeting on July 16 is excluded and will be documented separately. The July 13 Federal-State MOU Roundtable is summarized from the July 16 carry-forward discussion and may be supplemented later from additional staff notes. **Attendance:** Because the Summer Meetings were conducted virtually in multiple meeting blocks over four days, participation varied by session. A consolidated roster of individuals who participated in at least one of the eight member meeting blocks covered by this record is included in Appendix A.

Formal Business

Item	Record	Disposition
Quorum	A quorum was confirmed before formal action at the July 14 kickoff and July 16 business meeting.	Confirmed
April 23 minutes	Members approved the prior Washington, D.C. meeting minutes.	Approved
Officer election	The nominating committee presented the FY2027 slate of Earl Lewis, Candice Hasenyager, and Ria Berns.	Elected
Position #2026-03	Members reviewed the revised BLUF-format position addressing SRFs, WIFIA, and State & Tribal Assistance Grants.	Adopted
Federalism consolidation	Members identified material distinctions between delegated water-quality primacy and states' primary authority over water allocation and rights.	Split; Fall action

Organizational and Financial Direction

Strategic plan: Staff reported 123 completed tasks during the first six months of implementation, with the heaviest activity under *Meetings That Matter*, *Policy With a Punch*, and *Operational Transparency & Accountability*. Members supported using the strategic plan – not separate committee work plans – as the Council-wide work plan.

Policy modernization: The policy inventory had been reduced from approximately 52 positions to 25 before the Summer Meeting. New positions are being converted to short BLUF documents with supporting material separated from the core policy.

FY2026 budget closeout: Preliminary expenses were approximately 94% of budget. A revised-budget deficit of roughly \$71,000 was reduced to less than \$12,000, subject to final reconciliation. The principal reserve account was reported at approximately \$751,000, including \$50,000 in early FY2027 dues.

FY2027 budget preview: The full Council reviewed a proposed \$638,000 revenue / \$661,304 expense budget, with reserves available up to \$23,000, a 2.5% COLA, continued retirement-benefit funding as a placeholder, and WaDE operating at net \$0. The final budget was approved as documented in the separate Executive Committee record.

Operations: Members were briefed on the need to freeze the legacy pension plan and evaluate a successor arrangement for existing staff, as well as longer-term options for the WSWC office space.

MEETING-BLOCK HIGHLIGHTS

Federal-State MOU Roundtable — July 13

Members discussed how MOUs can strengthen coordination with federal agencies on water rights, water quality, watershed programs, rulemakings, and compliance. Wyoming highlighted a long-standing Forest Service MOU as a successful model, while members noted that high-level approvals and lengthy negotiations can make new agreements difficult to complete. Members supported compiling state-federal MOU examples in a concise comparative table to identify useful provisions and templates, with particular interest in FAST-41 and alternative-dispute-resolution approaches. Staff will continue collecting examples and consider follow-up webinars or other resource-sharing opportunities.

State Water Roundtable — July 14

State updates converged around drought and groundwater stress, staffing and permitting backlogs, data-center development challenges, aging infrastructure, uncertain/declining federal funding, water data modernization, and state agency fee/revenue options. The lightning-round format successfully identified topics for deeper discussion and future peer exchange.

Post-Sackett Permitting — July 15

Oregon, Colorado, Wyoming, and Nevada generally reported continuing NPDES coverage under broader state-waters authorities. Wyoming and Colorado highlighted their new state dredge-and-fill general permit and regulatory program, respectively; California discussed adapting existing authorities; and Utah is studying §404 assumption. Members emphasized the need for public education and better Corps-to-state handoffs when waters are found non-jurisdictional under federal law.

Water Data — July 15

Utah described a statewide modernization study focused on accessibility, governance, metadata, quality control, and sustainable funding. Other states reinforced that modernization is as much a business-governance challenge as an IT project. Members renewed concern about USGS and NRCS staffing, rising state cost shares, and the irreplaceable value of continuous long-term records.

Data Centers — July 15

Nevada discussed proposed advanced-treatment of reuse water and Legionella-control requirements for indoor contact cooling; Utah described project-specific water-use reporting; Idaho described a municipal-supply requirement; and Wyoming and Oklahoma discussed produced-water logistics and treatment concerns. Members favored continued tracking of data center developments over a one-size-fits-all policy while states build experience with rapidly changing technologies.

Water Infrastructure — July 15

States shared new financing and planning tools, including Oklahoma's state-funded gap loan program, Wyoming's statewide asset-management initiative, Utah's unified infrastructure plan, Kansas small-community grants, North Dakota cost-share review, and Nevada bond-funded grants. Common federal concerns included SRF reauthorization, congressionally directed spending, the end of IIJA funding, FEMA program changes, and NRCS dam-safety capacity.

Final Business Meeting — July 16

Members endorsed the general model of time-limited, state-led task groups but stressed that each group must begin with a clear deliverable and avoid becoming a standing committee. Streamgage support

emerged as a leading pilot topic, subject to Executive Committee direction. Members also volunteered to beta-test the discussion forum and requested a short after-action survey on the virtual format.

STATE SNAPSHOTS

Selected issues and initiatives reported during the July 14 state roundtable

NOTE: This table captures the states that provided substantive roundtable updates in the order in which they presented.

State	Highlights
SD	Severe drought and surface-water irrigation shutoffs west of the Missouri River; continued staffing challenges; chief engineer position filled.
NV	Indoor-contact cooling reuse/Legionella rulemaking; growth and staffing pressure; high-stakes groundwater takings litigation; continued WOTUS tracking.
OK	\$35 million state-only infrastructure gap loan program; new water-right enforcement/data funding; uncertainty about actual data-center water demand.
WA	Governor-led Washington's Water Future initiative; significant budget-reduction planning; review of water-right, dam-safety, and well-construction fees.
KS	Legislative water task force; heavily oversubscribed small-community grants; groundwater-management action plans; FEMA grant eligibility/reimbursement concerns.
OR	Water-right rule modernization and backlog reduction; aging data systems; drought-tool review; ASR/MAR policy interest; Harney Basin curtailment implementation.
TX	\$50 million for Hill Country flood-warning sirens; statewide "This Is Texas Water" public-awareness campaign; planning for a post-IIJA funding environment.
UT	Drought and wildfire impacts; state water-plan update; e-permitting; PFAS/biosolids workgroup; unified infrastructure plan; Great Salt Lake dedicated-water applications.
ND	Oil-revenue risk to cost-share programs; aging infrastructure; proactive data-center public outreach; low-head dam safety pilot; irrigation-permit pressure.
WY	Rapid energy/data-center project growth and permitting workload; statewide utility asset management; concern about reduced regional Corps coordination.
ID	Severe drought and conjunctive-management decisions; data-center and exempt-well legislation; dam-safety recruitment; Coeur d'Alene settlement; FIRO follow-up.
AZ	Established two new Active Management Areas in groundwater basins experiencing significant declines and began development of management plans.

FOLLOW-UP & ACCOUNTABILITY

#	Deliverable	Lead	Target / Status
1	Prepare separate water-quality/cooperative-federalism and state-water-rights policy drafts.	Michelle + volunteer states	Fall Meetings
2	Test Member Discussion Forum notifications, subscriptions, orientation, and usability before substantive launch.	Elysse + beta volunteers	Immediate
3	Post Nevada's indoor-contact-cooling reuse draft as an early substantive Forum test after functionality is confirmed.	Nevada + staff	Beta phase
4	Compile state-federal MOU examples, including FAST-41 and ADR language.	WSWC staff + members	Ongoing
5	Pursue Corps/WestFAST coordination on post-Sackett handoffs, nationwide permits, jurisdictional determination mapping, and regional relationships.	J.D./Michelle + WestFAST	Near term
6	Explore a Utah \$404-assumption webinar and continue tracking lessons from other state programs/litigation.	Staff + Utah	To schedule
7	Share Utah's water-data modernization study and finalize related resource materials as capacity permits.	Utah + staff	Upon release
8	Define a focused streamgage/SNOTEL task group with clear state leads and deliverables.	J.D./ExCom	Fall checkpoint
9	Maintain a concise data-center legislation/project tracker and research technology-specific water/reuse information.	Elysse	Ongoing
10	Update or validate the 2019 state infrastructure-financing matrix and monitor SRF, FEMA, NRCS, and IIJA-related developments.	Staff + states	As capacity allows
11	Issue an after-action survey and resolve Zoom registration, link, and notification problems before the next virtual meeting.	WSWC staff	Immediate

Next Meeting

The Fall 2026 Meetings in Las Cruces, New Mexico on October 21-23 will combine a field trip, a community-focused reception, a full day of Council meetings, and the Executive Committee meeting.

Approval

Approved / amended by the Council on: _____

Recorded by: _____

Chair: _____

Executive Director: _____

Supporting agendas, recordings, transcripts, chats, and materials are maintained in the WSWC meeting archive.

APPENDIX A — MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Summer 2026 Virtual Meetings | July 13–16, 2026

Participation varied by meeting block. This roster identifies individuals who participated in at least one of the eight member meetings and does not indicate attendance at every session. The invitation-only Executive Committee meeting is documented separately.

Western States Water Council	J.D. Strong, Executive Director; Michelle Bushman, Deputy Director & General Counsel; Julie Groat, Office Manager; Elysse Campbell, Policy Analyst
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State / Organization	Participants
MEMBER STATES	
Arizona	Kelly Brown
California	Joaquin Esquivel, Nancy Vogel
Colorado	Clint Carney, Nicole Rowan
Idaho	Nicholas Howell, Jerry Rigby, Mat Weaver
Kansas	Victoria Asbury, Chris Beightel, Stephanie Kramer, Earl Lewis, Connie Owen, Matt Unruh
Montana	Kamy Veith, Jake Watson, Jay Weiner
Nevada	Jennifer Carr, Cathy Erskine
New Mexico	Tanya Trujillo
North Dakota	Patrick Fridgen, Jennifer Verleger
Oklahoma	Sara Gibson
Oregon	Bryn Hudson, Racquel Rancier, Jennifer Wigal

South Dakota	Nakaila Steen
Texas	Patrick Lopez, Kerry Niemann, Brooke Paup, L'Oreal Stepney
Utah	Cory Angeroth, Candice Hasenyager, Mark Stratford, Joel Williams
Washington	Ria Berns, Melissa Downes, Lauren Driscoll
Wyoming	Sarah Bargsten, Chris Brown, Jeff Cowley, Jennifer Zygmunt
FEDERAL AGENCIES / WestFAST	
Bureau of Land Management	Paula Cutillo
Bureau of Reclamation	Travis Yonts
Environmental Protection Agency	Roger Gorke, Rose Kwok
U.S. Air Force	Lauren Dempsey
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Chad Abel, Carrie Cordova, Douglas Keinath, Jason Olive
U.S. Forest Service	Christopher Carlson, Mike Eberle, Jamie Krezelok, Andrea Rogers, Karen Wait
U.S. Geological Survey	Brian Clark
OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES	
U.S. Government Accountability Office	Lisa Vojta
OTHER PARTICIPANTS / PARTNERS	
HDR, Inc.	Chris Poulsen, Jake Watson

National Wildlife Federation	Adria Surovy; Alicia Marrs, Tracy Stephens
Parsons Behle and Latimer	Norman Semanko
Southern Nevada Water Authority	Hannah Mendez