WSWC Summer Council Meetings in Helena

The WSWC held its Summer Council Meetings July 15-18 at the Holiday Inn Conference Center Downtown in Helena, Montana.

At the Water Resources Committee Meeting, Mike Norris, USGS National Streamflow Information Program Coordinator, discussed the need to have regional assessments by expert teams to define National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) regional assessments and priorities for the 4,700 USGS streamgages around the United States. Also, during the Water Resources Committee Meeting, Doug Kluck (NOAA Central Regional Climate Services Director) discussed the Proposal for a Missouri River Basin Interagency Expanded Plains Snow and Soil Condition Network, explaining that the goal of the proposal is to present a framework for the establishment of an interagency, usable and sustainable network that will enhance the forecasting of runoff and act as an indicator for early warning.

During the Water Quality Committee Meeting, Peter Nichols, Special Assistant Attorney General for the States of Colorado and New Mexico, discussed the implications of the recent S.D.N.Y. Water Transfers Decision. He explained that more than 60 million residents in the arid west rely on water transfers daily; every major municipality relies on transfers for some water. He said that it may be economically, technically, and environmentally impossible to meet NPDES requirements for all water transfers. He concluded by saying that a critical legal issue for resolving such issues is the continuation of traditional federal deference to the states’ water law and water rights.

During the Legal Committee meeting, Alf Brandt, Executive Director of the Dividing the Waters Initiative at the National Judicial College, discussed the relevance and importance of preserving the Dividing the Waters Initiative. There are growing numbers of water conflicts in the West with newly emerging issues. There are more new judges in water courts with limited experience in civil-water law. There is increased dependence on foundation and private funding with dwindling foundation interest in judicial education. This creates an opportunity for the WSWC and its members to support and promote continued judicial education on water-related issues in the West.

At the "Full Council" Meeting, John Tubbs, Director of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, spoke about the economic connection of the DNRC in the State of Montana.

Also, the WSWC and WestFAST sponsored a pre-meeting workshop on Federal Non-Tribal Water Rights Claims. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together state and federal officials to discuss ways states and federal agencies can improve the process used to resolve federal non-tribal water rights claims, including the possible development of a clearinghouse of relevant information that states and federal agencies can use when working to address these claims. Participants addressed: (1) water issues associated with general stream adjudications; (2) water issues associated with permitted activities on federal land; and (3) ways to accommodate federal water needs within state legal frameworks.

Federal News

07/01: U.S. Drought Monitor Update for July 1, 2014; see link.
07/01: USACE Commander Urges U.S. Infrastructure Improvement; see link.
07/01: Report Shows Declining Trend in Prairie Pothole Wetlands; see link.
07/01: Congress Authorizes Eight Jacksonville District Projects; see link.
07/01: Interior Transfers Nearly $3 Million from Land Buy-Back Program to Cobell Education Scholarship Fund; see link.
07/02: North American Duck Populations Remain Strong, Wetland Pond Conditions Good, According to 2014 Duck Survey; see link.
07/02: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Trail Designated as a National Recreation Trail; see link.
07/03: USACE IWR – ICIWaRM Supports U.S. at International Hydrological Programme’s 21st Session of the Intergovernmental Council; see link.
07/07: USGS Release: Large Rivers in U.S. are Becoming Less Acidic; see link.

07/07: EPA Provides Tool to Help Communities Become More Flood Resilient /Smart Growth Approaches Can Help Communities Prepare For And Recover From Disaster; see link.

07/08: Lake Mead Levels to Drop to Historic Lows; see link.

07/08: Secretary Jewell Announces $43 Million to States for Parks, Outdoor Recreation through Land Water Conservation Fund; see link.

07/09: EPA Awards over $144,000 to New Mexico to Reduce Water Pollution; see link.

07/10: New Longwave Radiation Climate Record; see link.

07/15: Service Awards $16.6 Million in Grants to Support Recreational Boating and Clean Water in 21 States; see link.

07/16: EPA Administrator McCarthy to Attend Commission on Environmental Cooperation; see link.

07/16: Secretary Jewell Announces New Tribal Climate Resilience Program; see link.

07/17: EPA Awarding $2.1 Million to Revitalize Urban Waters; see link.

07/17: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Provides $5.6 Million in Grants to 12 States for Conservation Projects; see link.

07/17: New Policy Proposed to Benefit At-Risk Wildlife, Provide Credits to Landowners Taking Voluntary Conservation Actions; see link.

07/17: USGS Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Water Resources Research Act; see link.

07/17: What’s the Deal with 3DEP?; see link.

07/18: Bureau of Land Management Fire Program to Focus on Sage-Grouse Conservation; see link.

07/22: Reclamation and Partners Release New Hydrologic Projections for Contiguous United States; see link.

07/24: EPA Kicks Off Third-Annual Campus RainWorks Challenge to Develop Innovative Approaches to Stormwater Management; see link.

07/24: Satellite Study Reveals Parched U.S. West Using Up Underground Water; see link.

07/24: Deputy Secretary Connor Announces Additional Funding for Colorado Projects Designed to Reduce Risk to Local Water Supplies from Wildland Fires; see link.

07/25: Colorado Projects to Help Reduce Risk to Water Supplies from Wildland Fires; see link.

07/28: Historic Clean Water Act Settlement Will Prevent Millions of Gallons of Sewage Discharges into San Francisco Bay; see link.

07/28: Streamflow Increasing in Eastern Missouri River Basin, Decreasing Elsewhere; see link.


07/30: EPA Awards Oklahoma $1.3 Million to Reduce Water Contamination Risk in Underground Tanks; see link.

07/30: NASA Selects Instruments to Track Climate Impact on Vegetation; see link.

07/30: Slowing the Spread of New Invasives; see link.

07/31: U.S. Department of the Interior and Western Municipal Water Suppliers Reach Landmark Collaborative Agreement; see link.

State News

07/03: Forest Service 'Groundwater Directive' Prompts Questions from Western Governors on State Authority, Science; see link.

07/15: California Drought Study Shows Statewide Cost of $2.2 Billion, Loss of 17,100 Agricultural Jobs; see link.

07/15: Western Governors support 'Protecting Lakes Against Quaggas Act'; see link.

Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

- October 7-10, 2014: WSWC Fall Council Meeting, Scottsdale, Arizona (Talking Stick Resort).