WSWC Prepares for Summer Meetings in Helena, Montana

As part of the WSWC’s Summer Council Meetings, the WSWC and WestFAST are sponsoring a pre-meeting workshop on Federal Non-Tribal Water Rights Claims, which will be held prior July 15-16 at the Holiday Inn Conference Center Downtown in Helena. The purpose of the workshop is 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 will specifically address:

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.

This workshop is limited to invited state and federal experts as space is restricted. The workshop will begin at 8:00 AM on Tuesday, July 15, and end at 11:15 AM on Wednesday, July 16.

The other regularly scheduled council meetings will begin immediately following the non-trial water rights claims workshop at the same location in Helena, Montana on July 16-18, 2014. See the WSWC website for more information about the meetings in Helena.

Representatives from the Federal Government Speak at WGA Gathering

The Western Governors’ Association (WGA) held its annual meeting the week of June 9-11 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The following are some highlights.

On the first day, the WGA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding, renewing and strengthening collaboration on drought and flood preparedness. NOAA Administrator Dr. Kathryn Sullivan and WGA Chairman and Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper signed the MOU.

Interior and EPA provided keynote addresses. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell discussed drought and wildfire. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy gave a luncheon address that focused on her agency’s recently proposed regulations on carbon emissions from existing power plants under the Clean Air Act.

Deputy Secretary of the Interior Mike Connor participated in a roundtable discussion on water challenges and opportunities in the West, along with Colorado Conservation Board Director James Eklund and Southern Nevada Water Authority General Manager John Entsminger. They discussed water management strategies in the context of growing demands and the West’s unique hydrology. Connor noted Interior’s history of working cooperatively with the WGA and WSWC.

The meetings also included a private, live videoconference between the governors and President Obama on wildfire and efforts to improve forest management, including putting an end to “fire borrowing,” in which discretionary funding is carved out of federal agency accounts to pay for unanticipated emergency firefighting expenses.

See this link for the daily meeting summaries.

WSWC Vice Chair Goes Before the House Subcommittee on Water and Power

Pat Tyrrell of Wyoming, who serves as the WSWC Vice Chair, testified before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Water and Power on June 24, 2014.

See this link for more information.

WSWC Leader Moves From State to Federal Position

WSWC Chairman Phil Ward announced that he will be leaving on June 23 to accept a position as the Oregon State Executive Director of USDA’s Farm Service Agency. In addition to his WSWC position, Phil has been serving as the Director for the Oregon Department of Water Resources (ODWR). Thank you Phil for your service and leadership!
Federal News

06/24: NOAA, Partners Predict an Average ‘Dead Zone’ for Gulf of Mexico; Slightly Above- Average Hypoxia in Chesapeake Bay; see link.

06/26: BLM Finalizes Land Resource Management Plan that Provides for Energy Development, and Protections for Wildlife, Cultural and Natural Resources; see link.

06/27: Federal Wildlife Agencies Finalize Policy to Improve Implementation of Endangered Species Act; see link.

06/27: U.S. Forest Service Announces Support for Community Forests; see link.

06/30: Federal Agency Leaders Meet to Celebrate 20 Years of Native Plant Conservation and Renew MOU Commitment; see link.

State News

06/02: Watch the Video: Western Governors' Association Remains Committed to Policy Work on 30th Anniversary; see link.

06/09: Western Governors, NOAA Sign Agreement to Deliver Drought, Extreme Weather Data to States; see link.

06/09: WGA Annual Meeting Day 1: President Obama, Drought Readiness, Secretary Jewell, MOU with NOAA; see link.

06/10: WGA Annual Meeting Day 2: Governors Meet with EPA Chief on Carbon Emissions Rule, Delve into Water and Energy Issues; see link.

06/11: WGA Annual Meeting Day 3: Governors Elect Nevada's Brian Sandoval Chairman, Oregon's John Kitzhaber Vice Chair for Coming Year; see link.

06/11: Western Governors Approve 6 Resolutions Ranging from Regional Wildfire Resources to State Clean Air Act Authority; see link.

06/17: Interior Makes $436 Million Payment to Local Governments in PILT Funding for Vital Services; see link.

06/19: Western Governors Support Bipartisan Land-Exchange Reform Bill Introduced in the House; see link.

06/20: Nevada Gov. Sandoval Supports USDA Investment in Bi-State Action Plan for Sage-Grouse; see link.


Upcoming WSWC Meetings & Events

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