



**WESTERN  
GOVERNORS'**  
ASSOCIATION

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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# Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I thought long and hard before accepting the Chair of the Western Governors' Association, because I wanted to pursue a Chair's Initiative meaningful to my home state and the West. I also wanted to participate in the Governors' other collaborative policy work. Reflecting on the events of the past year, I believe we have achieved those goals.

It's no secret that in Hawai'i, invasive plants, animals, and pathogens are having an increasingly negative impact on our ecosystems, agriculture, infrastructure, and residents. That also is the case across the western states. As Chair, I was proud to launch the *Western Governors' Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative*, which examined the role of biosecurity in addressing the risks posed by invasive species across the region.

The Initiative's four regional workshops played a significant role by gathering leading regional experts to discuss policy challenges and share opportunities to address cross-boundary invasive species. Each was hosted by a fellow Western Governor, for which I owe a debt of gratitude to Nevada's **Brian Sandoval**, Wyoming's **Matt Mead**, and Montana's **Steve Bullock**. I had the honor of presiding over the final workshop on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

As this discussion needs to reach the widest possible audience, WGA livestreamed each workshop to enable anyone to watch, and subsequently made the videos available on its website ([www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org)). That's also where you will find our Initiative report, which includes a series of recommendations to increase collaboration on invasive species issues between federal and state partners, to better meet the biosecurity needs of states with unique landscapes and agricultural commodities, and to increase capacity for regionally important work, including biological control. There's an Executive Summary of the Initiative in this 2019 Annual Report.

WGA did additional policy work on invasive species outside the Initiative through its continuing efforts to contain the spread of invasive mussels. Just recently, the Governors asked Congress and the Administration to more effectively fund and empower state-led rapid response programs rather than create a new system that could interfere with existing containment efforts.

As they always have, Western Governors continued to work vigorously to protect state authority. For example, Congress long ago designated states as co-regulators in the Clean Water Act. Over the past year, however, legislative and agency challenges have arisen to the states' delegated

authority under Section 401 of the Act. In response, both the Governors and a WGA-led coalition of state associations have fought for the states and a system of cooperative federalism in which state authority is meaningful and federal decisions are informed by genuine state consultation.

WGA continued to develop the *Working Lands Roundtable* to enable the ongoing implementation of natural resource-focused policy issues that arose in previous Chair Initiatives. The Roundtable conducted a workshop in Wyoming last fall and met this spring in Denver. I am confident that the findings and recommendations emerging from my Initiative will continue to be a part of the Roundtable's work in coming years.

Last December, I had the honor of hosting 10 Western Governors, including WGA's incoming Chair **Doug Burgum** of North Dakota, at the WGA **2018 Winter Meeting** on the Kohala Coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i. In addition to showcasing some of Hawai'i's most dynamic leaders, such as world-renowned navigator **Nainoa Thompson**, we continued the Governors' dialogue with our federal partners by welcoming Secretary of Agriculture **Sonny Perdue**, Secretary of Veterans Affairs **Robert Wilkie**, and the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, **Linda McMahon**.

At the meeting, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Western Governors with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MOU establishes a framework that allows the U.S. Forest Service and WGA to work collaboratively on mutual goals and respond to the increasing challenges facing western landscapes.

A highlight of the Winter Meeting came at its conclusion, when outgoing Governors talked about their time in office and reflected fondly on their positive experiences working with other Western Governors on policies that benefitted the West. As I near the end of my time as Chair, I want to offer a similar positive message to the 11 new Governors who have joined the Association since their election last year. I strongly encourage them to continue to work together through WGA to solve the significant policy issues facing the region.



With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Y. Ige". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "Y" and "I".

David Y. Ige  
Governor, State of Hawai'i



**WGA hosted a lunch with Western Governors and Governors-Elect in November, 2018. Pictured, left to right: Nevada Governor-Elect Steve Sisolak, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, Wyoming Governor-Elect Mark Gordon, Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, Guam Governor-Elect Lou Leon Guerrero, Colorado Governor-Elect Jared Polis, Kansas Governor-Elect Laura Kelly, South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, and Idaho Governor-Elect Brad Little.**

## Dear Friend of the West,

The world of Western Governors is nothing if not dynamic. One expression of this dynamism is the number of new Governors joining WGA following last year’s general election. Of the 22 Governors represented by WGA, fully one-half were newly elected in November.

New Governors have a lot on their plates – managing transitions, organizing Administrations, engaging with Legislatures and learning the ropes of a complicated and important job. Accordingly, I wasn’t sure how much bandwidth these new Governors would have to devote to a regional, bipartisan policy association. I am pleased to report that these leaders very much recognize the value of WGA and the opportunity it provides to leverage their collective influence to make a positive difference in the region and nation.

The first post-election opportunity for the Governors to gather occurred in February at our annual breakfast with cabinet officials in Washington, D.C. Despite doing our level best to schedule the meeting at the most inconvenient time possible – 6:45 a.m. on a Sunday – a record fourteen Western Governors made the trek to the Environmental Protection Agency headquarters to visit with EPA Administrator **Andrew Wheeler**, Interior Secretary **David Bernhardt** and Labor Secretary **Alexander Acosta**.

WGA has several distinguishing characteristics, beginning with its fierce commitment to bipartisanship. Another is that no other group of elected officials, at their level of influence, is producing and pursuing bipartisan public policy that is as substantive and significant as that being promoted by Western Governors.

Consider the *Western Governors Endangered Species Act Initiative*, the *Western Governors’ National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative*, the *Western Governors’ Workforce Development Initiative* and the *Western Governors’ Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative*. All of these efforts, launched as initiatives of WGA chairs, have produced meaningful outcomes. For example, one-third of the statutory recommendations issuing from the forest and rangeland

initiative have been enacted into law. That initiative also led to WGA’s execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretary of Agriculture, **Sonny Perdue**, regarding shared stewardship of national forest resources.

We are poised to launch our next chair initiative, *Reimagining the Rural West*. This project, the brainchild of incoming Chairman **Doug Burgum** of North Dakota, will take a hard and sweeping look at rural sustainability issues, including opportunity, connectivity, and community.

To organize our continuing work on resource issues, WGA has established the Working Lands Roundtable. The Roundtable assembles an impressive array of experts and stakeholders to examine the interrelationship of complex land management issues and devise solutions to some of our most pressing environmental challenges.

I am privileged to acknowledge the extraordinary work of WGA’s 2018-19 Chair, the Honorable **David Ige**, Governor of Hawai’i. The 2018 Winter Meeting he hosted on the Island of Hawai’i was one of WGA’s most memorable ever. Of even more lasting significance is the leadership he demonstrated in launching the *Western Governors’ Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative*. This project has actively addressed the containment and eradication of invasive species in the West and will guide our work on this issue for years to come.

Associating with Western Governors has been the unvarnished highlight of my career in public policy. I am honored to welcome a new generation of Governors to WGA and pledge the organization’s continued cooperation in helping them achieve their bipartisan policy goals.



Respectfully,

James D. Ogsbury,  
WGA Executive Director





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Western Governors are responsible for the economic vitality of their respective states and benefit when the regional economy succeeds. WGA has supported efforts to boost regional growth by vigorously advocating for policy that supports workforce development, international trade, healthcare and foreign visitor preclearance.

## Rural Broadband

Community isolation and rugged terrain are just two of the factors that make rural broadband deployment logistically and financially challenging in western states. Lack of connectivity limits access to health care and public safety resources, prevents businesses from competing in the digital economy, and diminishes student access to education and training opportunities.

Western Governors are leaders in the effort to create cost-effective strategies to deliver connectivity to rural communities, including tribal areas. The WGA Policy Resolution, *Workforce Development in the Western United States*, highlights the Governors' support for congressional and federal efforts to deploy broadband to rural communities.

Additional policy work by the Governors has involved:

- Support for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) ReConnect Program, which helped secure an additional \$550 million for the program in FY19. The Governors also provided USDA with a summary of illustrative case studies about innovative broadband deployment projects in the West to further inform the program design.
- Encouragement to the Department of Commerce to partner with states to improve the quality and accuracy of broadband availability data.
- Transmittal of gubernatorial policy to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation for the hearing *Broadband Mapping: Challenges and Solutions*.



## Workforce Development

Western Governors continue to promote policies aimed at supporting workforce development in the region, guided by the Policy Resolution, *Workforce Development in the Western United States*. In the past year, those efforts have included:

- Vigorous advocacy for the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act*, which supports high-quality career and technical education programs that lead to in-demand, high-wage careers. The bill was reauthorized in July 2018 as the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*.
- Communication of the successful efforts of Western Governors through a panel, "The Role of States in Advancing Career and Workforce Development," at the National Career Development Summit in September 2018.
- Advocacy for apprenticeship programs at the House Committee on Education and Labor Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment hearing, "Innovations in Expanding Registered Apprenticeship Programs."
- Serving as a partner organization for the 2019 Western Pathways Conference, a regional conference assembling policymakers, educators, and business leaders to address challenges in education and workforce development systems.



# REALIGNING THE STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP

Realigning and strengthening the state-federal relationship is an underlying theme of Western Governors’ policy work. WGA works to educate federal partners about the legal requirements for, and benefits of, meaningful engagement with states. This year, WGA added the support of other groups for its legislative and administrative recommendations to improve the state-federal relationship and worked to promote them with the Speaker’s Task Force on Intergovernmental Affairs and U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform.

WGA has established itself as a leading resource on the state-federal relationship and has prepared and assembled an extensive body of materials regarding various aspects of that complex relationship.

- A WGA-led coalition of leading western regional organizations shared recommendations for congressional action with the Speaker’s Task Force on Intergovernmental Affairs. In addition to WGA, participating groups included the Western Interstate Region of National Association of Counties, Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, Western Interstate Energy Board and the Western States Water Council.

- WGA Policy Advisor Britta Beckstead testified on behalf of Western Governors before the Speaker’s Task Force on Intergovernmental Affairs. The testimony commended the Task Force for recognizing that partnerships with states will result in more efficient and effective policy and called upon Congress, “to clarify existing law by recognizing states’ legal status and requiring federal agencies to meaningfully consult with states.”
- Western Governors urged House and Senate leadership to continue to emphasize and improve the state-federal relationship during the 116th Congress. WGA Chair Hawaii **Gov. David Ige** and WGA Vice Chair North Dakota **Gov. Doug Burgum** emphasized the “meaningful dialogue” between Western Governors and the Speaker’s Task Force on Intergovernmental Affairs and Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Affairs over the past two years.

## Consultation on Federal Settlements

The Governors have long advocated for federal agencies to consult with states affected by federal settlements or

consent decrees. The Governors earned a victory in this regard with the issuance of Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3368, “Promoting Transparency and Accountability in Consent Decrees and Settlement Agreements,” which requires the department to notify impacted states within 15 days of receiving a complaint or petition for review.

## State Federal Data Sharing

Information-sharing between states and the federal government reduces duplication, improves decision-making, and is required for substantive consultation. Western Governors have urged federal agencies to incorporate state and local data and expertise, subject to existing state requirements for data protection and transparency, into their decision-making processes.

In response, Congress has recognized the value of state data and directed federal agencies to fully utilize state fish and wildlife data and analyses as a primary source to inform land use, planning, and related resource decisions. This year the Governors invited the Department of Interior to discuss state and federal data-sharing, as well as disclosure concerns and potential solutions.

**Above: Governors and Cabinet officials at the annual breakfast meeting during February in Washington, from left: Ralph Torres (Northern Mariana Islands), Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, Brad Little (Idaho), Lourdes Leon Guerrero (Guam), Kristi Noem (South Dakota), Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, Kevin Stitt (Oklahoma), Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler, Doug Burgum (North Dakota), Gary Herbert (Utah), Steve Sisolak (Nevada), David Ige (Hawaii), Kate Brown (Oregon), Mark Gordon (Wyoming), Michelle Lujan Grisham (New Mexico), and Laura Kelly (Kansas). In attendance, but not pictured, Jay Inslee (Washington).**





# BIOSECURITY AND INVASIVE SPECIES INITIATIVE

The spread of invasive and non-native species affects nearly every aspect of life in the West. As invading species replace native plants and wildlife, the ecosystems, economies and communities that depend on the West's natural resources are damaged and diminished, sometimes permanently. Improving biosecurity and invasive species management practices is essential to protecting the West from new invading species, reducing the effects of established species, and restoring the region's working lands and native ecosystems.

Hawai'i Governor **David Ige**, Chair of the Western Governors' Association, launched the *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* in July 2018 in response to this challenge. The Initiative focuses on the impacts that nuisance species, pests and pathogens have on ecosystems, forests, rangelands, watersheds and infrastructure in the West, and examines the role that biosecurity plays in addressing these risks.

The *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* commenced with an exploration of these issues through workshops hosted by Western Governors **Brian Sandoval** in Nevada, **Matt Mead** in Wyoming, **Steve Bullock** in Montana, and **David Ige** in Hawai'i. The workshops, which were livestreamed to reach the widest possible audience, assembled leaders in biosecurity and invasive species management to discuss the challenges that invasive species pose to the West and identify opportunities for Western Governors to address those challenges.

The workshops were followed by webinars that examined discrete issues surrounding invasive species management and control. Webinars examined several topics, including the effects of invasive species on fisheries, the role of conservation districts in invasive species management, and impacts of invasive species on Pacific Islands forests and ecosystems.



Hawai'i Governor **David Ige** launched the *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* as his central policy effort as WGA Chair.

The *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* report recommends actions Governors can take to achieve the following goals:

**Protect the West from the introduction of new invasive species through enhanced biosecurity practices, preparedness, and planning.** State and federal agencies should develop state and regional level biosecurity plans and utilize new and emerging biosecurity technologies. A regional biocontrol research center should be established, and interagency collaboration on biocontrol research, permitting, and utilization should be improved and streamlined.

**Improve cross-boundary collaboration and coordination for the management of established and emerging invasive species.** State, federal and local agencies should strengthen existing invasive species coordination mechanisms and build new collaborative structures to improve invasive species management at a regional scale, including a new Western Invasive Species Council. Rapid response practices can be enhanced by expanding the use of the Incident Command System, conducting regular practice exercises, and establishing a federal center dedicated to biosecurity and invasive species management.

**Empower state and federal agencies to manage invasive species by aligning federal laws, regulations, and funding mechanisms with states' needs.** State and federal agencies should have the funding and authorities necessary to effectively manage established and emerging species. Federal statutes and regulations should be structured to provide states greater flexibility with respect to invasive species funding, permitting, and rapid response. Federal regulations should reflect the broad diversity of habitat types and uses in the West. Where necessary, federal law should make provisions to effectively protect all states, whether their habitats include arctic tundra, rangeland, or tropical forests.

**Support and utilize biosecurity research, technology and planning tools.** Research and innovation are essential components of invasive species management in the West. State and federal agencies should identify and seize opportunities to pool research funds, coordinate the employment of new technology, and develop new monitoring, analytical, and decision-making tools. Enhanced use of electronic manifesting for commodity shipments, detector dogs, in-water vessel cleaning, and other tools can increase our effectiveness in mitigating invasive species impacts.

**Standardize and mobilize invasive species data.** Invasive species managers need access to accurate regional invasive species occurrence data to address invasive species at a landscape scale. However, technological barriers often prevent large amounts of useful invasive species occurrence data from being shared. As part of the Initiative, Western Governors will lead an effort to improve the mechanisms by which interagency invasive species data are standardized, stored and exchanged in the West.

The *Western Governors' Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* has provided a valuable regional forum to examine one of the most pressing natural resource issues in the West. If you would like to read and download the fill report, visit our website: [www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org).



**Initiative workshops were hosted by, from top, Western Governors Brian Sandoval of Nevada, Matt Mead of Wyoming and Steve Bullock of Montana.**





# INVASIVE MUSSELS

Western Governors have long advocated for coordinated invasive species management. WGA advanced that goal in 2018 when it gathered leaders from state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry to develop a new set of best practices for the recording and exchange of regional invasive species occurrence data.



## Invasive Mussels

The Governors have directed Congress and the Administration to support and empower state-led rapid response programs, rather than create a new system. WGA provided recommendations to Congress on improvements to interagency cooperation and support of state-led rapid response programs. These

suggestions include simplified reporting on new invasive mussel infestations and increasing federal funding for state-led aquatic invasive species rapid response programs.

In House and Senate testimony for FY 20 appropriations, the Governors proposed that the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service be provided with the

resources and statutory authority necessary to manage watercraft that are infested with invasive quagga and zebra mussels as they depart waterbodies under their jurisdiction.

A session at the Montana workshop of the *Western Governors' Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative* addressed effective regional partnerships to control the spread of invasive mussels.



# SPECIES CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

States have primary management authority over, and have developed considerable science and expertise about, fish and wildlife within their borders. WGA has developed extensive policy on wildlife and habitat, including a recently adopted Policy Resolution, *Compensatory Mitigation*. The resolution urges federal agencies to coordinate with states in the development of compensatory mitigation programs and policies.

## Task Force on Collaborative Conservation

The **Western Governors' Task Force on Collaborative Conservation** is a state-led effort to develop proactive approaches with federal partners to conserve habitat and at-risk fish and wildlife species.

The Task Force, launched at the 2018 WGA Winter Meeting, will help Western Governors proactively partner with federal agencies, state fish and wildlife leaders, and other stakeholders. Goals of these collaborations are to develop

and prioritize regional conservation actions while preserving the integrity and viability of western working landscapes and communities.

Past collaborative efforts leveraging state and federal resources have successfully conserved species to the extent that they do not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Western Governors, however, recognize the need for a more proactive approach that incentivizes conservation well before at-risk species become subject to a possible listing.

## State Wildlife Data

For the sixth year in a row, report language in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019, directs the Department of Interior and the United States Forest Service to, "fully utilize State fish and wildlife data and analyses as a primary source to inform land use, planning, and related natural resource decisions." This language has been advocated exclusively by WGA and reflects the Governors' position articulated in the WGA Policy Resolution, *State Wildlife Science, Data and Analysis*.



# AIR QUALITY

Western Governors work collaboratively with state agencies and federal partners to maintain regional air quality. Guided by the policy resolution, *Air Quality and Emissions Regulation*, the Governors address issues such as methane emissions, exceptional events, regional haze, and the air quality impacts of wildfire. During the past year, the Governors endeavored to strengthen the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) communication with states regarding agency rulemaking and commended the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for acknowledging state leadership in regulating emissions from oil and gas.

## Revised Methane Rule

In 2016, the BLM and EPA published final rules regulating methane emissions from oil and gas operations on federal lands. Before and after finalization of the rules, Western Governors urged BLM and EPA to recognize that the regulation of methane emissions must be adapted to local circumstances and that states competently regulate air quality and oil and gas operations.

In 2018, BLM revised the rule and rescinded provisions that were duplicative of state regulations, acknowledging the efficacy of existing state programs. Similarly, EPA proposed revisions to its rule, determining that certain existing state programs meet, or go beyond, the rule’s proposed requirements and can therefore be an alternative to EPA regulation.

## New Source Performance Standards

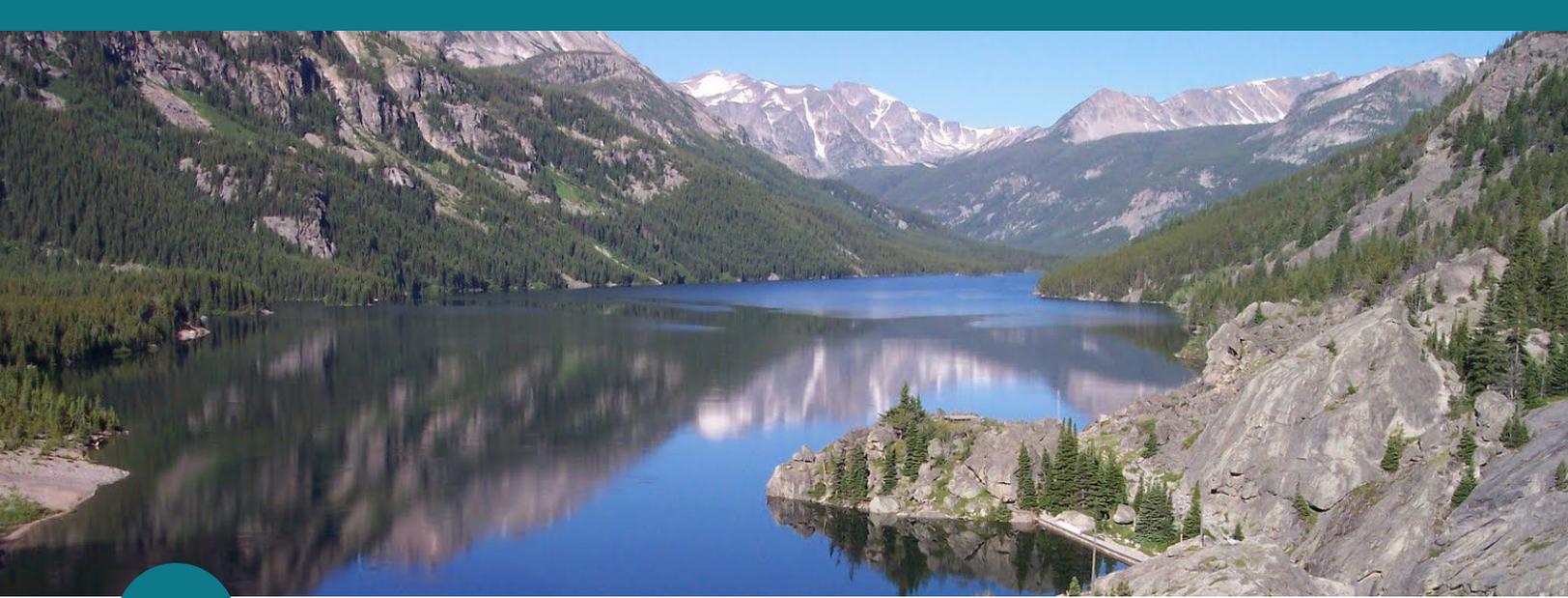
Emissions from wood heaters represent a critical public health and environmental issue in the West. EPA’s proposals to extend the New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) compliance deadlines for new residential wood heaters, residential hydronic heaters, and forced-air furnaces drew fire from Governors.

The Governors, who request that the agency maintain the current NSPS deadlines, reminded EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler that states are relying on the current deadlines to meet the responsibilities of their State Implementation Plans, as required by the Clean Air Act.

**The Governors promoted several regional air quality priorities in the past year. The following highlights some of that work:**

- **Support** for the key principle of EPA’s Regional Haze Reform Roadmap: leveraging state leadership for implementation of the regional haze program. The roadmap was also positively cited for how it reduces burdens on states and supports their implementation of the Clean Air Act.
- **Requests** for early, substantive government-to-government consultation between EPA and the states on policy such as the Exceptional Events Rule and the Affordable Clean Energy Plan.
- **Sharing** the Governors’ policy on using prescribed fire to mitigate the air quality impacts of wildfire for the House Subcommittee hearing, “Air Quality Impacts of Wildfires: Mitigation and Management Strategies.”





# WATER

Clean, reliable water supplies in the arid West are a crucial resource for communities, industries, habitats, and farms, essential to maintaining quality of life and ecosystems. Western Governors have a long history of policy development and advocacy in protecting states' primary legal authority over water resources. States are best suited to speak to the unique nature of western water law and hydrology.

## **Clean Water Act: Section 401**

Congress purposefully designated states as co-regulators in the Clean Water Act (CWA) under a system of cooperative federalism that recognizes states' legal authority over the management, allocation, administration, protection, and development of water resources.

Western states have significant expertise that can inform federal decisions on effective, efficient water quality certification and have been designated as partners and co-regulators with federal agencies in the administration of the CWA. Western Governors, joined by several associations of state officials, have repeatedly rejected changes to agency rules or policy that diminish, impair, or subordinate states' well-established sovereign and statutory authorities to protect water quality within their boundaries.

Over the past year, legislative and agency challenges have arisen to states' congressionally delegated authority to certify federal licenses and permits under Section 401 of the

Act. On April 10, 2019 President Trump issued the Executive Order, "Promoting Energy Infrastructure and Economic Growth," which raised significant concerns for Governors regarding its impact on this vital state authority. The work of Governors and WGA in the past year to oppose this attack on state authority has been extensive.

- A WGA-led coalition, which now includes 10 other leading associations of state officials, urged the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Water to reject any changes to agency rules under Section 401. The coalition asserted: "The best way for Congress and the Administration to improve regulatory efficiency is to engage with states – through Governors – in early, ongoing and meaningful consultation." The coalition also shared this message with Congressional leadership.
- Recommendations for process improvements related to water quality certification under Section 401 of the CWA were advanced by a WGA-led coalition that included five other leading associations of state officials. The recommendations were shared with leadership of the

EPA and Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). They include several process reforms to reduce certification delays or denials and emphasize early coordination and communication between applicants and state and federal officials in the water quality certification process.

- Proactive outreach before the issuance of the Executive Order alerted the White House that the Governors were aware of the possible order and other challenges to state authority. "We urge you," the governors said in a letter signed by WGA Chair Hawaii Gov. David Ige and WGA Vice Chair North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, "to direct federal agencies to reject any changes to agency rules, guidance, or policy that may diminish, impair, or subordinate states' well-established sovereign and statutory authorities to protect water quality within their boundaries."
- The Governors reiterated their concerns when the Executive Order was issued in April but welcomed the opportunity offered in the Order to work closely with federal partners on improved policies for water quality certification.

## Water Policy

Western Governors continued to work on a variety of water policy issues in the past year, as the following illustrates.

- Congress adopted appropriations report language reiterating WGA's policies regarding states' primary jurisdiction over water resources and reminding the Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service of Congress's expectations that state water laws will be followed during consideration of requests for permits and permit renewals.
- The report also urged USACE to "exclude natural flows – which are traditionally the subject of state jurisdiction – from any definition of "surplus water." Western Governors have repeatedly expressed their concerns to USACE and Congress about this important issue.
- Language Included in a Senate Explanatory Statement accompanying S. 3021, America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, reflects WGA's support for legislative protection of EPA's Water Transfer Rule.
- WGA continued its successful advocacy of the National Integrated Drought Information System Act, which was reauthorized by Congress.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

Western Governors support more efficient infrastructure permitting and environmental review processes that don't shortcut state input or compromise natural resource, environmental, or cultural values. Because states manage environmental and natural resources within their borders, Governors are necessary partners in federal permitting and environmental reviews potentially affecting those resources. Early, meaningful and substantive federal consultation with states and the use of state expertise can reduce duplication and conflict, rendering reviews more efficient and effective.



### One Federal Decision, NEPA

The Governors have engaged with leadership of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regarding the development of One Federal Decision policy and the revision of regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Governors have urged CEQ and other agencies to take advantage of opportunities to improve state-federal communication and coordination on infrastructure.

In October 2018, the Governors questioned the Administration about the application of the One Federal

Decision policy to states. CEQ subsequently issued guidance that clarified the applicability of the policy to states assigned NEPA authority under the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program administered by DOT. Western Governors noted western states' success in reducing the timelines for project approval under the program and requested that CEQ and DOT consult with states in the development of any federal policy affecting this program.

The Governors also recommended that CEQ model meaningful treatment of states in the federal rulemaking process as part of its NEPA rulemaking. The Governors

also provided substantive recommendations to CEQ to improve the state-federal relationship through the rulemaking.

### Resolutions

In the past year the Governors approved the new WGA Policy Resolution, *Modernizing Western Infrastructure*, and updated the Policy Resolution, *Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States*. The new resolution articulates the Governors' support for reviewing the federal permitting process and recommends the federal government encourage joint NEPA reviews with states.





# WORKING LANDS ROUNDTABLE

The Western Governors' Association launched the Working Lands Roundtable to promote the ongoing implementation of WGA natural resource-focused policy efforts. The Roundtable examines crosscutting policy issues by engaging a broad coalition of stakeholders to advance past Chair Initiatives and other resource-related policy priorities.

The Roundtable was launched in October 2018 with a workshop in Wyoming. A Denver workshop followed in May 2019.

## Wyoming Workshop

At the Working Lands Roundtable in Cheyenne, **Gov. Matt Mead** urged attendees to make a difference. "You are involved in a process that will work through the Western Governors and have potential for change in Congress. Time here is well spent because it can make a difference," said Gov. Mead. "This is a place where answers can be found."

In his keynote, the Governor discussed several invasive species, including cheatgrass and pathogens, that plague his state and noted their interconnectedness. "If we can't control cheatgrass, for example, what does that mean for sage grouse preservation? When wildfire destroys habitat, it makes it that much harder to preserve the species."

WGA **Executive Director Jim Ogsbury** explained how the Roundtable would assemble leaders in land management and invasive species to examine crosscutting policy issues and continue the work of past WGA Chair Initiatives and policy priorities. "The Roundtable," he explained, "is where the natural resource-based WGA Chair Initiatives will go to live, cross-pollinate, and prosper."

The event also included multiple panels focused on the work of the *Western Governors' Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative*, which addresses: the impact of invasive plants on sensitive



**Western Governors' Association Executive Director Jim Ogsbury spoke at both of the Working Lands Roundtable workshops.**

species; rangeland restoration tools; livestock and wildlife disease; and more.

## Denver Workshop

The Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service reminded participants of the importance of focus in a keynote that kicked off the Working Lands Roundtable in Denver.

"How often are we working hard, and doing what we think we need to be doing, but we lose sight of what is really the most important thing?" asked **NRCS Chief Matt Lohr** at the opening of the two-day event. "If we can stay focused on our guiding principles (for conservation), we can continue the great work we are doing in conservation."

## Wyoming Workshop Cheyenne Oct. 11-12, 2018

**Theme:** The rehabilitation and restoration of landscapes after wildfires, active management strategies to address the risks of invasive annual grasses, and adaptive management principles.

**Keynote:** Honorable **Matt Mead**, Governor of Wyoming

**Moderator:** **Doug Miyamoto**, Director, Wyoming Department of Agriculture

## Colorado Workshop Denver April 3-4, 2019

**Theme:** Examination of at-risk species conservation, broad-scale threats to western working landscapes, and cross-boundary coordination.

**Keynote:** Chief **Matt Lohr**, Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Moderator:** **John Freemuth**, Executive Director of the Andrus Center for Public Policy

WGA's Ogsbury explained in his remarks that the enormity and complexity of the issues being considered were not daunting to the Association. "Once WGA has established a beachhead to confront hard challenges, we're in it for the long haul, fighting for the Governors' priorities."

The workshop focused on an examination of at-risk species conservation, broad-scale threats to western working landscapes, and cross-boundary coordination in resource management and planning.



# FOREST AND RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Responsible management of forests and rangelands is of critical importance to the ecosystems and economies of the West. Public lands provide the water we drink and the food we eat, resources for economic vibrancy, and playgrounds for recreation. Western Governors know that wildfire, invasive species, and land management decisions have very real consequences for the landscape and have worked through WGA to advance policies that will ensure the vitality of our lands for generations to come.

## Shared Stewardship MOU

WGA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that advances joint objectives of the *Western Governors' National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative* and the Department's Shared Stewardship Initiative.

The agreement, announced at the WGA 2018 Winter Meeting in Hawai'i, establishes a framework for WGA and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) collaboration to achieve mutual goals, further common interests, and effectively respond to the increasing range of challenges facing western landscapes.

The agreement — signed by WGA Chair and Hawai'i **Governor David Ige**, WGA Vice Chair and North Dakota **Governor Doug Burgum**, and Secretary of Agriculture **Sonny Perdue** — aligns with the USFS strategy to work more closely with states on identifying



WGA Chair and Hawai'i Gov. David Ige signs the MOU, as Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and WGA Vice Chair and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum look on.



and implementing shared priorities for targeted management. WGA and USDA are currently working together to identify projects to address several regional and cross-boundary management challenges.

### Farm Bill

WGA advocated for the enactment of Farm Bill provisions to improve land management in western states. The Farm Bill, passed by Congress and signed into law in December 2019, incorporates several provisions supported by Western Governors, including:

- Greater flexibility for states in the use of Good Neighbor Authority;
- Federal funding for states to conduct hazardous fuels reduction for cross-boundary wildfire mitigation;

- Codification of the State and Private Forestry Program that promotes cooperation between federal, state, tribal and private land managers.

Since the Farm Bill's passage, Western Governors have called for greater collaboration between the USDA and state and local agencies. In separate correspondence to USDA Under Secretaries Bill Northey and Jim Hubbard, WGA has highlighted Farm Bill priorities and encouraged the Department to implement its new authorities in support of improved land management practices.

### Congressional Appropriations

Western Governors achieved multiple successes in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019.

- **Wildfire Funding:** The bill provides nearly \$4 billion between the Departments of the Interior and USDA for wildfire management, providing fire suppression funding at the 10-year average and an additional \$500 million in appropriations (a \$113 million increase above FY18). This funding does not incorporate the "fire borrowing" fix the Governors achieved in the FY18 omnibus appropriations act, which will take effect in FY20.

- **State-Federal Land Management Coordination:** Funding for USFS State and Private Forestry received \$329 million, \$6 million more than FY18 and \$163 million above the President's request. This funding is integral to federal-state cross-boundary cooperation.



## PUBLIC LANDS

### Full funding for PILT

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) compensate local governments for revenues lost due to the property tax exemption for federal lands. These payments help fund critical services on federal lands, including law enforcement, search and rescue operations, fire management and emergency medical services. Without PILT payments, local governments would lack sufficient resources to manage these important functions. The Governors strongly advocated for full funding of the PILT program, and Congress appropriated \$500 million for PILT in FY19 in support of the Governors' request.

### Target Practice and Marksmanship Training Support Act

The Training Support Act, signed into law in May 2019, gives western states more flexibility to use Pittman-Robertson Act funds for the development, expansion and maintenance of public shooting ranges. These ranges support local economic development and increase Pittman-Robertson receipts for future range development, training and conservation projects.

Western Governors also supported passage of the Act because local shooting ranges operate as effective firearm education and safety institutions, enhancing the safety of recreational shooting on public lands, minimizing the

### National Parks Deferred Maintenance

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 contains an increase of \$127 million to address longstanding National Park Service deferred maintenance and major construction projects. WGA Policy Resolution 2016-10, *National Parks and the West*, emphasizes the importance of national parks to western economies, culture and history.

potential for unintended wildfire and maximizing the potential for recycling the lead and brass of target practice ammunition.



# ENERGY & MINING

In 2018 the Governors updated their *Energy Vision for the West*, a guide for energy development and use in the West, the nation’s principal energy provider and a leader in innovation and effective policy. The Governors also adopted resolutions on cybersecurity, cleanup of abandoned mines, and critical minerals. Their congressional advocacy has promoted legislation on: advanced nuclear reactors; carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration technology; and voluntary cleanup of abandoned mines by non-responsible parties.

## Transmission

The Governors are fiercely protective of state decision-making authority over transmission siting and permitting on non-federal lands. This past year the Governors highlighted the statutory obligation of the Department of Energy to meaningfully consult with states on its triennial electric transmission study, which provides the basis for the designation of any national interest electric transmission corridors. The Governors also urged federal agencies to consider multiple land management objectives (such as prevention and minimization of the effects of wildfire on grid reliability) as they plan transmission on federal lands.

## Energy Policy

The *Energy Vision for the West* addresses several new or expanded areas of WGA focus, including: energy storage; alternative fuels and vehicles; grid resiliency and reliability in the face of external threats; and the use of data to improve our understanding of energy resources and services. The Governors also promoted legislation on energy technology development and deployment.

- Nuclear energy is an important component of the West’s all-of-the-above energy approach. Accordingly, the Governors supported the passage of legislation that promotes advanced nuclear power facilities by authorizing the allocation of unutilized advanced nuclear production tax credits.
- Western Governors strongly support federal policies that promote carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) research and technology. They illustrated that support by submitting letters and testimony on legislation and hearings that further the development of CCUS.

## MINING

### Good Samaritans

The enormous number of abandoned hardrock mines in the West cannot be addressed without voluntary remediation by “Good Samaritans” that are not responsible for cleanup. Such remediation efforts, however, are unfortunately discouraged by liability concerns.

As a result, Western Governors continued to advocate this year for Congress to reintroduce and expedite consideration of legislation addressing Good Samaritan liability. They also encouraged the Environmental Protection Agency and Congress to investigate whether states with existing regulatory programs for abandoned hardrock mines are best positioned to administer a Good Samaritan permitting program.



### National Minerals Policy

Access to domestic minerals is essential to our nation’s economy and national security. This year Western Governors have urged

Congress to work in partnership with the states to oversee mineral exploration and development in a manner that balances the nation’s supply needs with protection of natural resources and the environment.





# MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

## Governors' Meetings

Seven Governors gathered for the **2018 Annual Meeting** hosted by South Dakota **Governor Dennis Daugaard**, the immediate past Chair of WGA. The meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota, was highlighted by: entrepreneur **Philip Anschutz's** keynote at Mount Rushmore on the role of innovation in the building of the West; remarks by Labor Secretary **Alexander Acosta** and Interior Secretary **Ryan Zinke**; and a spirited conversation with first spouses of Western Governors. WGA also published a report on the *Western Governors' Workforce Development Initiative*, the central WGA policy effort of then-Chair Daugaard.

Eleven Governors gathered at the **2018 Winter Meeting** on the Island of Hawai'i hosted by WGA Chair **Governor David Ige**. They guided public discussions about the outdoor recreation economy, improved career paths for veterans, and the impact of social determinants on healthcare. The Governors also engaged with Secretary of Agriculture **Sonny Perdue**, Secretary of Veterans Affairs **Robert Wilkie**, and Small Business Administrator **Linda McMahon**. In addition, the Governors executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Agriculture to further collaboration on challenges facing western landscapes.

## Other Highlights

The Governors held their annual breakfast meeting with U.S. cabinet officials during February in Washington, D.C. Interior Secretary **David Bernhardt**, Labor Secretary **Alexander Acosta** and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator **Andrew Wheeler** answered

## Digital Outreach

WGA's website experienced steady growth throughout the 2019 Fiscal Year, with total visits up 10% over the previous year. Aggressive social media outreach efforts on multiple platforms, including a four-week Facebook advertising campaign that reached nearly 20,000 users, continued to expand WGA's reach to new audiences. Additionally, WGA livestreamed more than 40 workshop sessions to YouTube and Facebook, racking up thousands of views and more than 1,500 hours of WGA-produced content watched.

Governors' questions, discussed state-specific issues, and explored paths to a more collaborative state-federal relationship. The 13 participating Governors were **Lourdes Leon Guerrero** (Guam), **David Ige** (Hawaii), **Brad Little** (Idaho), **Laura Kelly** (Kansas), **Steve Sisolak** (Nevada), **Michelle Lujan Grisham** (New Mexico), **Doug Burgum** (North Dakota), **Ralph Torres** (Northern Mariana Islands), **Kevin Stitt** (Oklahoma), **Kate Brown** (Oregon), **Kristi Noem** (South Dakota), **Gary Herbert** (Utah), and **Mark Gordon** (Wyoming).

WGA Executive Director **Jim Ogsbury** continued to promote the bipartisan work of the Governors in myriad keynotes and events across the country. For example, he spoke at the rollout of the USDA's "Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes" initiative with Secretary **Sonny Perdue** and U.S. Senators **Lisa Murkowski** (Alaska), **Maria Cantwell** (Washington), **Steve Daines** (Montana)

and **Ron Wyden** (Oregon). Ogsbury shared the Governors' policy priorities at the "Roundtable on Issues Related to Public Lands in the Western United States" hosted by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in Washington D.C. He moderated a conversation among former Wyoming governors **Dave Freudenthal** and **Mike Sullivan** at the Wyoming Business Alliance meeting, and delivered a keynote address at the Arizona Energy Consortium Southwest Energy Conference.

## Media Coverage

Western Governors continued to receive extensive positive media exposure, with coverage of their policy work appearing in more than 260 stories, op-eds and press releases during the past fiscal year. Coverage appeared in national newspapers and broadcast outlets on topics such as the Annual and Winter meetings, the *Biosecurity and Invasive Species Initiative*, Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Much of this coverage was included in significant national media outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, *E&E News*, *Bloomberg News*, *ABC News Radio*, and *NPR*. Regional coverage was widespread, as WGA-related stories appeared in the *Denver Post*, *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, *High Country News*, *Rapid City Journal*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *Seattle Times*. An op-ed authored by Executive Director Jim Ogsbury, written in advance of a study tour organized by Global Affairs Canada and the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*, *The Province* in Vancouver, and the *London Free Press* in Ontario.



# CELEBRATE THE WEST



From left: *The Old and the Young* by Karina Yang; *Sammy* by Hadley Smith; and *The Emerald City* by Nomingere Barsbold.

The third year of WGA's Celebrate the West regional art competition challenged high school students to create works inspired by their state or life in the West. The competition attracted more than 450 entries from the 19 member states of WGA and Guam. Winning artwork was displayed at WGA's 2018 Annual Meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota, where meeting attendees viewed the state finalists and voted for the top three.

## Top Three

- **Karina Yang** of Hamilton High School in Arizona took home First Place for the acrylic painting, *The Old and the Young*.
- **Hadley Smith** of Cheyenne Public Schools in Oklahoma took second place for the oil painting, *Sammy*.
- **Nomingere Barsbold** of Newport High School in Washington was awarded third place for the acrylic painting, *The Emerald City*.

## 2018 State Winners

- Alaska: **Kailey Edenshaw**, Ketchikan High School, *Rhythm That Runs Through the Beauty of Nature*, acrylic paint
- Arizona: **Karina Yang**, Hamilton High School, *The Old and the Young*, acrylic paint
- California: **Layla Lee Choi**, Sunny Hills High School, *Breathtaking*, oil paint
- Colorado: **Kayelynn Montague**, Big Sandy High School, *The Fondest of Forests*, watercolor
- Guam: **Michael Fernandez**, Simon A. Sanchez High School, *New Horizon*, acrylic paint
- Hawai'i: **Elizabeth Hashimoto**, Homeschool, *Fire Dancer*, acrylic paint
- Idaho: **Caroline Bass**, Renaissance High School, *Adrift*, charcoal and white chalk
- Kansas: **Alexandria Hagermen**, Hays High School, *Reminiscing*, graphite and charcoal
- Montana: **Gabe Goll**, Belgrade High School, *The Field*, watercolor
- Nebraska: **Anna Currier**, Bancroft-Rosalie High School, *My Rooster Zeus*, colored pencil
- Nevada: **Jakob Sprague**, Alpine Academy, *Abandoned*, oil paint
- New Mexico: **Autumn McNabb**, Academy for Technology and the Classics, *Taos Sunsets*, oil paint
- North Dakota: **Joel Anderson**, Tioga High School, *Main Street*, oil paint
- Oklahoma: **Hadley Smith**, Cheyenne Public Schools, *Sammy*, oil paint
- Oregon: **Gabriel Schwepler**, Homeschool, *Rodeo Veteran*, graphite pencil
- South Dakota: **Brady Umberger**, Spearfish High School, *In the Distance*, acrylic paint
- Texas: **Hannah Li**, William D. Clements High School, *A Cowboy's Spirit*, acrylic paint
- Utah: **Brynleigh Rosier**, Granger High School, *Mother Nature's Monuments*, acrylic paint
- Washington: **Nomingere Barsbold**, Newport High School, *The Emerald City*, acrylic paint
- Wyoming: **Lakin Reichert**, Guernsey-Sunrise High School, *Respect*, colored pencil

View all the "Celebrate the West" winning entries on the WGA website:

[Westgov.org/  
celebrate-the-west](http://Westgov.org/celebrate-the-west)



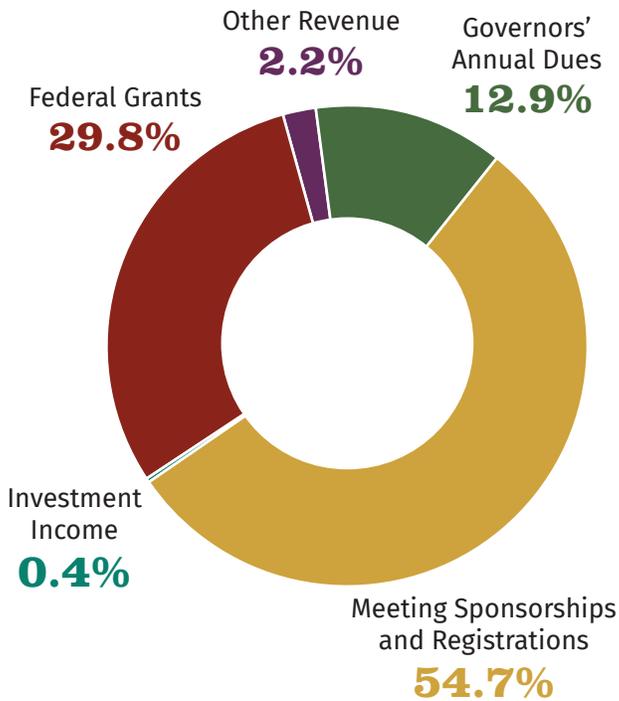


# FINANCES

WGA income is derived from Western Governors’ annual dues, sponsor contributions, meeting registration fees, grants, investment income, and other sources. WGA income totaled \$4.6 million for the fiscal year, with approximately 30% of that amount received from federal agencies to provide technical assistance to states and other contractors. The following is excerpted from the audit report of JDS Professional Group, Certified Public Accountants, Consultants and Advisors. The information is for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

## Revenues

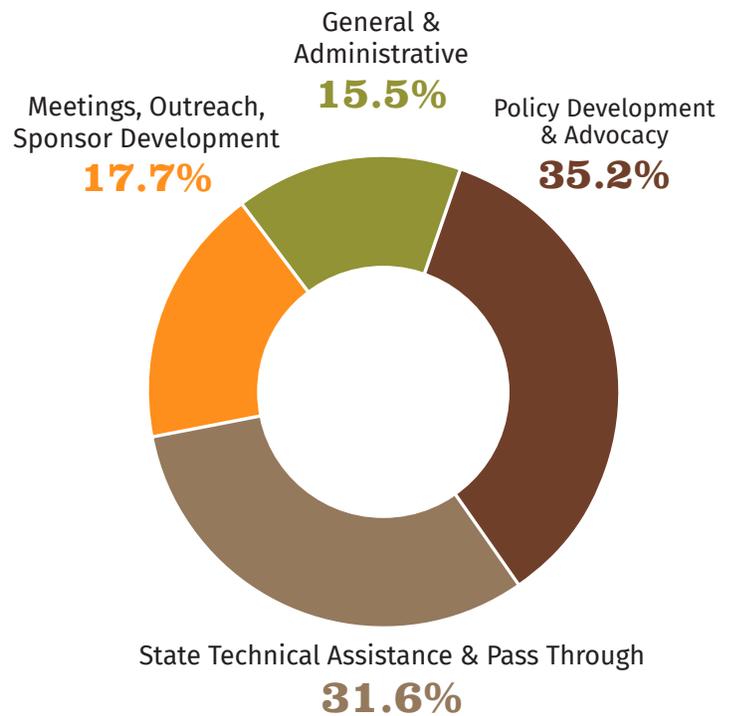
July 1, 2017—June 30, 2018



Governors' Annual Dues	\$594,000
Meeting Sponsorships and Registrations	\$2,522,041
Federal Grants	\$1,372,271
Investment Income	\$16,451
Other Revenue	\$103,535
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,608,298</b>

## Expenses

July 1, 2017—June 30, 2018



Policy Development & Advocacy	\$1,481,102
State Technical Assistance & Pass Through	\$1,332,227
Meetings, Outreach, Sponsor Development	\$743,652
General & Administrative	\$652,652
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,209,633</b>

# WESTERN GOVERNORS

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## The Western Governors' Association Region



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