

Introducing the Western Association of Agriculture Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD)

Agricultural experiment stations, which were established through the [Hatch Act of 1887](#), are part of the land-grant university system and receive funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to conduct food and agricultural research. Today, these stations conduct applied and basic research in a wide variety of subject areas impacting food and agriculture systems while also providing a network of scientific experts who offer impartial data to states and communities across the country.

The [Western Association of Agriculture Experiment State Directors](#) (WAAESD) is comprised of experiment station leaders from 13 western states and the 4 Pacific Trust territories which make up the [western region](#). Organized in 1948, WAAESD aids in planning and management of research activities important to the region, largely in response to the congressional requirement set forth in the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 that all agricultural experiment stations spend at least 25% of Hatch funds on regional research. This regional commitment was redefined in the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 as [multistate research](#). WAAESD serves as the region's principal experiment station liaison with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture ([NIFA](#)) of USDA.

In addition to providing management oversight of the western region's portfolio of multistate projects (search under "West" at <https://www.nimss.org/>), WAAESD supports the Western directors on high priority regional initiatives. Finalized in

2015, [The Western Perspective and Western Agenda](#) serves as a [roadmap](#) for how partnerships among land-grant universities, agricultural experiment stations, and cooperative extension support all western region communities sustained by agricultural and natural resources economies.

To expand partnerships beyond the land-grant university communities, WAAESD co-hosts an [annual spring conference](#), with this year featuring several sessions dedicated to building relationships with other organizations. Policy advisors from the Western Governors' Association and CSG West are participating in the 2021 Spring conference. An update from the Western Water Network geared towards significant issues affecting freshwater security in the western region over the next 30 years will also be featured. WAAESD is committed to working with partners and policymakers to solve complex issues such as water security in the western U.S.

[Bret Hess](#), Executive Director of the WAAESD, has led the organization since April 2020. Prior to his current role, Bret served 23 years as a faculty member at the University of Wyoming, the last nine years as Director of the Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station and Associate Dean for Research in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Bret and WAAESD members are always interested in hearing from legislators and staff and can be reached directly by email (bhess@unr.edu) or phone (307-760-3319). You may also visit <https://www.waaesd.org/all-directories/aes-directors-directory> to locate the experiment station leaders in your state.