

# CSG West Director Highlights Efforts by Western Policy Network

CSG West's Director, Edgar Ruiz, participated in the 2018 Western Regional Partnership (WRP) Principal's Meeting that convened November 14-15 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. WRP serves as a mechanism to improve coordination among federal, state and tribal leaders to address common concerns and identify emerging issues in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. The WRP is co-chaired by Utah Governor Gary Herbert; Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment Robert McMahon; and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Minerals Management.

Director Ruiz was invited to participate as a panelist for a plenary session focused on effective partnerships and best practices for coordinated planning. The panel, which was moderated by Mr. Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist West for U.S. Department of Agriculture, included Lee dePalo, Regional Administrator for FEMA Region VIII, and Gareth Smythe, Associate Policy Advisor and Military Land Use Planner of the California Governor's Office.

For his part, director Ruiz provided an overview of the evolution and ongoing efforts of the Western Policy Network that serves as an informal, information-sharing working group focusing on furthering the state - federal relationship. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) was a catalyst for the formation of the Western Policy Network that initially comprised regional associations such as WGA, CSG West, the Conference of Western Attorneys General, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, and the Western Region of the National Association of Counties. The Network has now grown to include other regional and national state and local government associations, including the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Council of Western State Foresters, Environmental Council of States, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, National Governors' Association, Western Interstate Energy Board, Western States Land Commissioners Association, and the Western States Water Council.

Director Ruiz stated that through the Network, regional and national associations have exchanged information and collaborated to improve the state consultation process pursuant to federal agency and Congressional actions. This has included summits in Washington, D.C. over the last two years to meet with relevant federal officials, adoption of joint federalism principles, and correspondence to Congressional leaders and federal agency heads offering recommendations. Most recently, the Western Policy Network has focused its efforts to preserving state authority pursuant to Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act.

Participation in the WRP Principles' Meeting afforded CSG West an opportunity to showcase the efforts of the Western Policy Network, and to also learn about national defense strategies, Southwest border security initiatives, and trends in public lands, species, energy and water in the region. A special thanks to Mike Mower, Deputy Chief of Staff for Utah Governor Herbert, for his invitation to participate in the meeting, as well as to Amy Duffy who helped organize the WRP. For more information about the WRP, please visit: <http://wrpinfo.org>

To learn more about ongoing efforts of CSG West and other regional and national associations to further state - federal cooperation, please refer to our website at: <https://www.csqwest.org/policy/StateFRefforts.aspx>