

ACWI 2008 Annual Meeting
National Water Census – *Water for America Initiative*
Questions for Discussion on February 20, 2008

Both the U.S. Geological Survey's 2007-2017 strategic plan and a recent National Science and Technology Council strategic plan call for conducting a national water census to assess water availability. This would be the first comprehensive national water availability assessment to be conducted in 30 years.

The USGS is currently scoping a national effort to carry out this water census and would like to hear from representatives of national stakeholder organizations on their recommendations for its design and implementation. The USGS is asking the Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI) to include a discussion of the proposed water census in its 2008 Annual Meeting February 20-21, 2008. ACWI's membership is composed of a broad spectrum of national water resources interests—Federal agencies, state and local governments, private industry, and non-governmental organizations—for the purpose of advising the Federal government on Federal water-information programs.

The special briefing to ACWI will provide a general outline of the objectives and proposed scope of the water census, and will serve as an orientation for the representatives of ACWI member organizations. It will include an overview of the ongoing Great Lakes Basin Water Availability Pilot, which serves as a template for future water census activities. This will be followed by a discussion with ACWI representatives to provide stakeholder input on the plans for this census. In addition to this feedback during the annual meeting, ACWI member organizations will be given three weeks in which to provide any additional written comments (see timeline below). We plan to focus the discussion around the following five questions:

1. What are the key types of national and regional decisions and policy issues that need improved water information?
2. What specific variables or indicators would be most useful to inform national and regional water availability decisions?
3. What are the appropriate spatial and temporal scales for such an effort? How can we best design the study to provide information useful at the national, regional, and State scales?
4. What information products would be most useful to report the results of the study?
5. Are there collaborative opportunities to work with regional, State, and local water resources agencies in conducting the water census?

We look forward to working with the national water stakeholder community as we design and carry out the national water census.

Timeline for Engaging ACWI

February 1, 2008

Transmit agenda for ACWI February 20-21 meeting, including discussion of the Water for America initiative, based on NSTC and USGS strategic plans.

February 8, 2008

Send out additional information on the proposed water initiative.

February 20, 2008

USGS leads half-day session at ACWI meeting to engage stakeholders and get input on the proposed design and priorities.

March 21, 2008

ACWI members' written comments on are due to the ACWI Executive Secretary (tjohnson@usgs.gov), and will be transmitted to the USGS planning team.

March 25, 2008

Water initiative planning team meets to finalize changes to plan.

Decisions and progress on Interior's Water for America initiative will be reported at future ACWI meetings.

For more information on the Water for America Initiative, please see the Department of the Interior web site at: <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/water.html>, and the USGS web site at: <http://water.usgs.gov/wsi/>