

## ACWI Teleconference on Monitoring Challenges August 16, 2012

Partner Organization Attendees	USGS Attendees
Brandon Kernen, ASDWA	Bill Werkheiser
Doug McLaughlin, NCASI	Pixie Hamilton
Mary Musick, GWPC	Robert Mason
Alan Lulloff, ASFPM	Jim Kolva
John Miller, ASFPM	Clarice Ransom
Larry Larson, ASFPM	Mike Norris
Richard Raione, NRC	Bill Wilber
Sue Lowry, ICWP	Judy Campbell Bird
Bob Schreiber, ASCE	Mike Yurewicz
Tim Williams, WEF	Katherine Lins
Steve Heiskary, NALMS	Bill Cunningham
Robert Mace, WSWC	Wendy Norton
Tony Willardson, WSWC	

**Document shown via webinar:** the draft prepared by ICWP and commented on by Anne Castle.

*Bill Werkheiser* made introductory remarks, including a brief summary of background/history of the question that Assistant Secretary Anne Castle has asked ACWI to tackle. Then he asked, “Does the draft document capture what we’re looking for?”

*McLaughlin* – I’m wondering about the scope of this as it relates to other USGS programs, like NAWQA.

*Werkheiser* – I think Anne sees this as being focused on surface water and groundwater, but certainly water quality is an issue that we need to look at also.

*McLaughlin* – What I’m grappling with is the role of higher level uses of the data – for example, to help understand ecosystems – in addition to basic needs fulfilled by the data, like flood forecasting. I’m trying to understand better what the magnitude of competing interests is within USGS.

*Werkheiser* – We can decide whether we want to include that in this charge. Streamgaging is a central issue certainly, but when I talked with Anne offline she said that groundwater monitoring also needs to be addressed, and water-quality monitoring should be too. But this effort could become unwieldy if we include too much. The USGS Cooperative Water Program is a huge player in all three areas: groundwater, surface water, and water quality.

*Schreiber* – The leveraging of partners and innovative ways of thinking and funding activities is important. We need to search for as many ways of leveraging the funds as possible, and get partners to participate. Is the National Flood Insurance Program a driver (for example) that we could leverage to get partner participation?

*Werkheiser* – Public/private partnerships came up during discussions at the meeting ACWI. The private sector is a group we have traditionally **not** interacted with very much. With respect to streamgaging, one of our drivers is to create a stable network that’s not vulnerable to the volatility of funding sources. Within the groundwater program we have the National Ground Water Monitoring Network, and the whole basis of that effort is leveraging. There will be different strategies for surface water versus groundwater versus water quality.

*Schreiber* – Gaining stability and maintaining it is difficult in a shrinking budget climate, and expanding the partner base is one way to deal with that.

*McLaughlin* – It's important that we acknowledge the fact that funds have been short for a while, so in some situations there may not be any additional opportunities to increase efficiency. We need to acknowledge the efficiencies that have already been made during the last decade. We can't squeeze much more out of our existing budgets.

*Werkheiser* – Yes, we definitely need to look at alternative ways to help the networks. There's only so much we can efficiency we can squeeze out before nothing is left.

*Mason* – Outfitter units in the private sector have been very helpful in some States, and that's a pretty large base of potential partners.

*Werkheiser* – Have we done the analysis of what all the uses of the groundwater data are?

*Cunningham* – We have not.

*Werkheiser* – We need to include that in this charge.

*Cunningham* – Yes.

*Willardson* – I agree; we have been through this exercise a number of times in the past. What are we going to say now that's different from what we've said previously?

*Werkheiser* – The letter from the Secretary should refer to what's already been done and what still needs to be done.

*Lowry* – We want the letter to ask us to do the right thing. And if we want our recommendations to have any impact, we can't drag this out too long. We almost have two tiers of activity that need to be addressed in looking at the monitoring networks: the first is the USGS program that we've already worked with a lot and that Anne has the most influence over; the second includes activities such as EPA water-quality monitoring, public/private partnerships, etc. The second tier may include items that the Department of the Interior can't really affect/change. We may want to focus first on the question: "What is the appropriate Federal obligation/role in these programs?"

*Raione* – Agreed.

*Werkheiser* – Whenever we're considering an expenditure of Federal dollars, we have to be able to clearly and compellingly state the Federal role.

*Willardson* – I'm wondering about OMB's role and whether we're being asked to say what's appropriate to support at -5% and -10% budget levels.

*Musick* – Should Interior ask us to look at alternatives or substitute (surrogate) methods for monitoring such as remote sensing, modeling, or the use of reference watersheds/wells?

*Norris* – As we're talking about new technologies or different ways of obtaining the information, we need to have a conversation about the quality of the data too.

*Schreiber* – There's an R&D role here as well. Part of the question should perhaps be: "What would ACWI recommend as being fruitful avenues for R&D?"

*Raione* – We should also add a paragraph on how the various ACWI subcommittees will be challenged by the downward funding trends.

*Schreiber* – I see the Secretary's letter asking ACWI to identify the drivers that are causing the need for the data. Which drivers could be the most fruitful for bringing partners in to leverage existing funds?

The TMDL process, for example, is a huge driver. We already mentioned FEMA and flood forecasting. Another one might be FERC permitting for hydropower.

*Werkheiser* – We've had good discussions about the drivers for surface water information; we need to clearly show the link between each driver and the users of that information.

*Willardson* – A recent review of Landsat looked at their drivers and the users of the satellite info. I don't know if that approach would resonate with OMB, but I hope it would.

*Werkheiser* – We've explored that, at least for streamgaging.

*Schreiber* – We could bring in DOE, EPRI, and others as partners and pose questions to them about the way they use the data and what benefits the data provide for them. We could approach many of the ACWI members about this.

*Lins* – We're constantly being approached by people who want to know if we have a role in infrastructure for data exchange. We need something in the letter about whether Federal agencies can provide mechanisms for serving data of known quality from other agencies.

*Lowry* – It seems like most of the things we've already talked about are already included on Peter's draft. By the end of today's call, we could have a charge that looks good to us, and then we'll decide next steps?

*Werkheiser* – Yes, we can incorporate comments from today into the draft, get this group to review it early next week, and then send it to Anne so it can be turned into a letter from the Secretary. Then we can talk about how we'll proceed to meet the charge.

*Hamilton* – One major item that is **not** captured in the charge is a review of what's already been recommended and done on this issue.

*McLaughlin* – I would support adding that to the letter. There are a couple of places in particular where we might want to change the wording a little just to reflect what has been done in the past (increasing efficiency, etc). Further down in the draft, the word "restructuring" is used. That sounds really big. Is that what we're really talking about? If not, we need to soften the wording so it better reflects the scope of what's being asked.

*Werkheiser* – I would rather keep the focus on issues and function, and not so much on structure of the monitoring programs.

*Kernan* – We could consider adding the concept of using regional water monitoring councils, and aligning fund distribution at the Water Science Center level to better take advantage of the dollars and efforts of these councils and other groups.

*Werkheiser* – Yes I agree.

*Hamilton and Schreiber* – [added ideas to the draft]

*Werkheiser* – Are we ok with incorporating the comments from today and then giving it back to you all for review before sending to Anne?

*Norton* – I will make changes and email the document back to the group by Mon or Tues, August 20-21.

*Werkheiser* – Altogether we're looking at a 9-10 month timeframe.

*Hamilton* – It's very important to note what the USGS has already done, including recommendations that have **not** been pursued (and why). Also, are those recommendations still valid?