



**Development of Recommendations to Assure
Strong Water Data & Science in a Constrained/Shrinking Budget**

Agenda

January 28, 2013: 1:00 – 2:30pm EST

Call in Numbers:

Non-USGS locations: 1-855-547-8255 (toll free); access code: 53700

USGS staff at Headquarters - x4848 (same access code)

Other USGS offices/DOI locations - 703-648-4848 (same access code)

- | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------------|
| I) | Introductions and Agenda Review | 1:00pm |
| II) | Revision/Acceptance of Notes from January 14 Meeting | 1:10pm |
| III) | USGS Groundwater Monitoring Network | 1:15pm |
| | a. Overview –Bill Cunningham | |
| | i. Existing monitoring network | |
| | ii. Proposed monitoring network | |
| | iii. Network support infrastructure | |
| | iv. Quality assurance | |
| | b. Q&A | 1:50pm |
| IV) | Federal Appropriations & FTEs –Status & Trends | 2:00pm |
| | a. Overview –Jerad Bales | |
| | b. Q&A | 2:10pm |
| V) | Discussion of Next Steps toward the “Advice and Recommendations” | 2:15pm |
| | a. What ideas are in the “parking lot?” | |
| | b. What preparation should we initiate now to inform and facilitate future meetings? | |
| VI) | Adjourn | approximately 2:30pm |

NEXT MEETING IS PLANNED FOR MONDAY, February 11, FOR 90 MINUTES BEGINNING AT 1PM EST

Peter Evans' Notes from January 16 Meeting with Assistant Secretary Castle

Following our January 14 teleconference, I met with the Assistant Secretary and her Deputy, Lori Caramanian, to review our progress and plans. My primary motive was to assure that the efforts this ACWI workgroup is making to develop the advice and recommendations that she requested will be timely and helpful. The outline (2 pages) that I provided for their consideration in that meeting is attached for your review.

She was notably focused and engaged for the full hour that we scheduled together, and the following highlights seem especially important as we continue our work together:

1. She has followed the notes that Wendy prepares from our discussions with enough interest that I didn't need to summarize the participation to date.
2. Despite the announcement that morning that Secretary Salazar plans to resign by the end of March, she was very focused on the workload ahead and my sense is that she is eager to put the ACWI workgroup recommendations to good use in the months ahead.
3. She anticipates that most federal agency budgets will shrink, and prefers that we not frame our considerations around a "flat" budget for USGS water programs in the next fiscal year. None of the agencies have been given the "pass-back" from the White House/OMB yet, which usually happens mid-November, which I interpret as an indication the President is still working on a pared-back budget request for FY-2014. She appreciates the value that USGS water monitoring and assessment science brings to every other bureau within the Interior Department, to other federal agencies, and everyone else, but our recommendations will be most useful if they anticipate a funding decrease of at least 5% to 10% in FY-2015. Applied to the FY-2012 level of funding (\$213.6M), that suggests a reduction of federal funding by \$10M to \$20M or more.
4. She anticipates that the Interior Department process for developing FY-2015 budget requests will proceed on the normal schedule, meaning that they expect USGS and the other bureaus to present their proposals to the Department budget team in June and that the Department request will be presented to the OMB in September. She does not expect the CR or the sequestration negotiations with Congress to delay that schedule, and June will be the most useful time for the ACWI workgroup recommendations to be provided (at least in draft form).
5. All ideas for bringing appropriate, new sources of funding into play should be considered, along with the potential consequences of USGS losing the capability to continue specific functions (e.g., who else might be able to assume those functions), should be evaluated.
6. She is clearly interested in having an opportunity to review and respond to the ACWI workgroup report and recommendations before they are presented to the full ACWI membership this summer, and she listened intently to the options we have discussed for structuring our identification, evaluation and prioritization, and she did not offer other ideas or suggestions for our consideration.

ACWI'S CONSTRAINED/SHRINKING BUDGET DELIBERATION

16 January 2012

HISTORY

10 July ACWI Meeting

16 August ACWI Workgroup teleconference (25 participants, including 13 non-federal and 1 OFA)

18 October ACWI Workgroup teleconference (19 participants, including 10 non-federal and, 3 OFA)

- Explore options for scheduling our review, evaluation, formulation & prioritization of recommendations

6 November Letter from Assistant Secretary specifying the task parameters

“...advice and recommendations ...to help USGS and Interior leadership continue to provide high quality water monitoring and related science within a framework of constrained financial resources...”

9 November ACWI Workgroup teleconference (19 participants, including 9 non-federal, 1 OFA)

- NSIP

3 December ACWI Workgroup teleconference (25 participants, including 15 non-federal, 2 OFA)

- Proposed strategy, schedule

10 December ACWI Workgroup teleconference (29 participants, including 19 non-federal, 2 OFA)

- Surface Water Monitoring

14 January ACWI Workgroup teleconference

- USGS Strategic Directions for Water Mission

PARTICIPATION TO-DATE

Non-federal: AASG, AMWA, ASCE, ASFPM, ASDWA, AWWA, GWPC, ICWP, NAWQA Stakeholders, NCASI, NGWA, WEF, WSWC (occasionally UCOWR, NALMS)

OFA: COE, NRC, TVA

Missing: AWRA, NOAA, EPA, ESA, NACP, NRCS/USFS

STRATEGIC APPROACH OF THE WORKGROUP

Review each of the 3 primary monitoring networks (surface water, groundwater & water quality)

- Investments & management of the existing networks & proposed enhancements

Review data management methods & infrastructure investments & benefits

Review the “related science” investments & benefits

- WaterSMART HUC-8 budgets, regional focus studies
- NAWQA
- major aquifer studies
- regional streamflow characterization
- CWP interpretive studies

Review R&D investments & benefits

Review and characterize “needs” supported by USGS monitoring & assessment (DOI, OFA, non-federal agencies, tribes, private sector, NGOs & universities), both in terms of their tolerance for uncertainty and the justification for federal appropriations:

Federal responsibility (e.g., tribal & international agreements)

National priority (e.g., flood forecasting, especially in large, interstate basins; interstate allocation compacts;

Very important, but could be supported by others (e.g., regional aquifer studies, where USGS participation avoids cost and delay due to “dueling experts,” or development of innovative and transferable techniques);

Convenient, but could be supported by others

Brainstorm potential recommendations

Evaluate & refine recommendations that appear most viable & useful

Prioritize recommendations, distribute draft to Assistant Secretary & all ACWI

Present proposed recommendations to the full ACWI

QUESTIONS

When will DOI need to see results? Is this timeframe affected by the Debt Ceiling, Sequestration or CR negotiations?

What does the “shrinking budget” question imply? Is it wise to base these deliberations on an assumption that the USGS Water budget can be defended at the current level (\$210M) for the foreseeable future, or should they anticipate a reduction?

Lots of interest in demonstrating OFA dependency on USGS water monitoring; is this useful in the context of the “shrinking budget” question? How about ideas for new sources of revenue (e.g., user fees or donation opportunities associated with data access, which could vary significantly from year to year)?

Would a survey of ACWI members that ranks or prioritizes the 27 Strategic Actions in the new Strategic Directions document be helpful (would require plan, schedule & effort to develop survey, collect & compile results)?

How much attention should be invested in evaluating the viability of shifting some significant monitoring or assessment functions to the states, local agencies and the private sector?



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

NOV 6 2012

Dear Members of the Advisory Committee on Water Information:

The Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI) has long provided important advice to the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of USGS, and I all value that advice very much.

In the face of **growing demands for streamflow information and recognizing the likely constraints on Federal resources in the coming years**, I am asking for advice from ACWI on approaches and options that might be implemented by USGS and Interior leadership in order to sustain and enhance water monitoring and related science for the Nation.

I intend for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) **to continue and strengthen its leadership of water resource monitoring networks, assessments, and research** necessary to understand, protect, and sustainably utilize our nationwide water supplies for current and future needs. I also recognize that **Federal budgets are likely to continue to be severely constrained and possibly declining for the foreseeable future**, requiring that USGS (with help from its stakeholders) clearly **articulate its science and service priorities in order to increase efficiency, collaboration, and focus in providing essential data and interpretive expertise**.

With these facts in mind, I ask that ACWI **provide advice and recommendations** within the next ten months to help USGS and Interior leadership **continue to provide high quality water monitoring and related science within the framework of constrained financial resources**, recognizing that the options available will involve difficult choices and the support of water community leaders will be required and gratefully appreciated.

I request ACWI's advice to **assist us in identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing options** for achieving the objectives of the USGS water data and science programs, **including** mechanisms through which:

- USGS can explore **funding sources** of all sorts and models, especially focusing on program drivers and non-traditional, non-Federal sources including the private sector, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and utilities;
- USGS can **collaborate and leverage** activities and funds across stakeholder boundaries (Federal, State, tribal, other) and possibly delegate some activities to funding partners or State and regional monitoring councils;
- USGS can take full advantage of **new and emerging technology** to obtain more comprehensive and better quality water data and drive down costs;
- USGS can **prioritize** monitoring locations, data parameters, and interpretive studies;
- USGS and others can improve the **utility of geospatial data and statistical analysis** to improve our understanding of non-gaged streams and sections of streams;

- USGS can **reduce costs** for water monitoring;
- USGS can collect, manage, and **deliver data** (surface water, groundwater, and water quality) **and applications** for public use.

ACWI should also consider **any other reasonable options** that can be developed for avoiding the loss of essential science and services due to shrinking budgets. These issues should be considered **in the context of the Federal role** in monitoring the Nation's water resources and in maintaining a national database in which data are comparable and readily available to all.

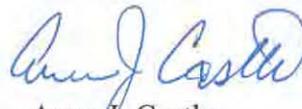
An evaluation of the USGS streamgaging program was undertaken by an ACWI-sponsored Streamgaging Task Force about 10 years ago (<http://acwi.gov/streams/SF-ReportAug29-03.pdf>). ACWI also sponsored reviews of the Cooperative Water Program in 1999 and 2004 (<http://acwi.gov/coop/index.html> and <http://acwi.gov/coop2004/index.html>). As a result, ACWI should consider the events of the intervening decade, including:

- the **current Federal role** that these national monitoring networks fulfill (remembering that USGS has no regulatory or resource management responsibilities);
- the **steps USGS already has taken** to achieve efficiencies in its monitoring networks, and the results of those measures;
- the **status of the recommendations** contained in the 2004 report –
 - which recommendations were adopted and what was the result;
 - which recommendations were not adopted and what were the impediments to adoption.

I would like to have meaningful input, even if a final report is not complete, by the next ACWI annual meeting in July 2013. USGS leadership and I will provide assistance as necessary, **but I am looking for an independent report** from the Advisory Committee.

I thank ACWI members for their tireless service on behalf of the water resources community, and I look forward to your advice and recommendations.

Sincerely,



Anne J. Castle
Assistant Secretary
for Water and Science