

Monitoring Challenges Teleconference 11 Feb 2013

Attendees:

Peter Evans, ICWP	Kevin Dennehy, USGS	Judy Campbell Bird, ACWI-NLC
Wendy Norton, USGS	Mike Norris, USGS	Doug McLaughlin, NCASI
Bill Wilber, USGS	Dan Sullivan, USGS	Steve Heiskary, NALMS
Jerad Bales, USGS	Jim Kolva, USGS	Fred Bloetscher, AWWA
Robert Mason, USGS	Bob Goldstein, EPRI	Dave Carlton, ASFPM
Mike Yurewicz, USGS	John Wells, ACWI-SWRR	Robert Mace, WSWC
Pixie Hamilton, USGS	Mary Musick, GWPC	Brandon Kernen, ASDWA
Susan Trapanese, USGS	Sue Lowry, ICWP	Ben Pratt, Susquehanna RBC

Teleconference: The call-in number is 1-855-547-8255 (toll free); Access code: 53700#

Agenda:

- 1:00 pm I. Introductions and Agenda Review
- 1:05 pm II. Revision/Acceptance of Notes from Previous Meeting
- 1:10 pm III. Discussion of Next Steps toward the "Advice and Recommendations"
 - a. Revisit the "Challenge" and design next phases of our deliberation
 - i. Are any Key Stakeholders missing?
 - ii. What ideas are in the "parking lot"?
 - iii. How do we envision our "recommendations and advice" taking shape and what other preparation would facilitate and inform our next meetings?
 - b. Schedule update –
 - i. Are any Key Stakeholders missing?
 - Shift to avoid Memorial Day; other conflicts?
 - ii. Do we need to schedule time to hear from the Other Federal Agencies?
- 1:30 pm IV. USGS Water Quality Monitoring Network
 - a. Overview – Bill Wilber
 - i. Existing & proposed monitoring network
 - ii. Network support infrastructure
 - iii. Quality assurance
 - b. Question & Answer
- 2:30 pm Adjourn

Action Items:

1. **Wendy Norton will compile an initial list of external reviews and circulate it along with the notes from this meeting. People should send additions/revisions to Wendy, and when the document is in good shape it will be added to the "Background Documents" section of the website, where everyone can have access to it (http://acwi.gov/monitoring-challenges_wkg/backgd_documents.html).**

Revision/Acceptance of Notes from Previous Meeting:

Are there any changes or comments on the meeting notes from our previous call? If not, then the minutes from the previous meeting are adopted. (No changes were suggested.)

Let's talk FIRST about next steps, to ensure we have enough time.

Discussion of Next Steps:

The May 27 meeting will be moved to May 28, to avoid the Memorial Day holiday. The meeting time (1:00 p.m. eastern time) will remain the same.

Presentation by Peter Evans on ACWI Advice and Recommendations to Assure Strong Water Science in a Shrinking Budget:

How can we organize our recommendations, when we get to that point? One suggestion offered was to use the USGS Strategic Plan as a framework.

Regarding slide # 8 – "How to organize our recommendations" – we may want to draft a list of principles that come with USGS engagement in something (synthesis, impartiality, etc.). Also, monitoring needs to be continuous – we can't stop/start monitoring sites every time there is a blip in the budget.

Geographic scope of coverage may need more emphasis in our priority setting scheme and evaluation process.

Learning what's going on with water monitoring in other countries could help. Even looking at what's happening in the U.S. (for example, the State monitoring programs that EPA funds) could help.

What do we want to do about the "parking lot" where we put ideas that we can't implement now but want to "park" for later use? We can maintain a parking lot on the ACWI website; people can send items to Wendy Norton, and she will update the parking lot document and have the web mistress upload a new version whenever there is new content (or once a week).

Discussion of possible ACWI recommendations on redirecting funds within the USGS Water Mission Area – it's problematic for this group to make funding recommendations because we have no way of knowing the programmatic impact that moving funds around would have. Perhaps rather than recommending funding changes, we would do better to prioritize activities that USGS funds?

We also need to take a look at external reviews of USGS programs. The National Research Council, Government Accountability Office, and others have done numerous independent reviews of USGS programs, including the monitoring networks.

ACTION: Wendy Norton will compile an initial list of external reviews and circulate it along with the notes from this meeting. People should send additions/revisions to Wendy, and when the document is in good shape it will be added to the "Background Documents" section of the website, where everyone can have access to it (http://acwi.gov/monitoring-challenges_wkg/backgd_documents.html).

Can we poll the USGS Water Science Centers (WSCs) to get details about their priorities and hot issues? Pixie Hamilton explained how priorities are set each year for the Cooperative Water Program, since much of the priority-setting for the WSCs is driven by their Coop Program customers. Bill Wilber agreed to provide similar information relating to the National Water-Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Program.

Doug McLaughlin suggested that mining / synthesizing recommendations from previous reviews might be useful. These documents should be displayed separately from the other background documents that are on the website.

The Heinz Center work is strongly recommended as background reading for this group because the Heinz Center documents show what the information needs are and where the data gaps are. The Heinz Center publications area available by going to <http://www.heinzctr.org/archive.html> and clicking on "Resources," then clicking on "Major Reports."

Do we want to have a presentation by Robin O'Malley, who was deeply involved in the Heinz Center process? Perhaps, but we have a lot of other information to digest first, so that would be something for further down the road.

Could this group benefit from a briefing on USGS WSC internal operations? Perhaps such a briefing would help us understand how budget changes translate down to the WSCs. We could possibly find some cost efficiencies there.

Presentation by Bill Wilber on USGS Water Quality Monitoring Networks:

Bill Wilber will give his briefing at the next meeting (February 25), since we're running out of time. If people can look at the Heinz Center report on data gaps in the meantime, that would be helpful. The report is located on the Heinz Center archive website, but there is no direct link to it, so please follow these instructions:

- Go to <http://www.heinzctr.org/archive.html>
- Click on "Resources"
- Click on "Major Reports"
- Scroll down to the report titled "Filling the Gaps" and click on it
- A PDF of the report should download to your computer

A list of background materials related to USGS water-quality monitoring is available on the website (http://acwi.gov/monitoring-challenges_wkg/backgd_documents.html). Water-quality recommended publications and web links are in the document titled "Monitoring Challenges Related Links," and there is also a "Branch of Quality Systems Fact Sheet" available.

Wrap-up:

We need to begin forming some committees to do the remaining work of this group, so Peter Evans will talk with people individually to lay the ground work for a discussion of committee formation, which we will try to have at the next meeting.

Next meeting will be Feb 25 and will focus on water quality networks.

External Evaluations of USGS Programs

Reviews by the National Research Council

National Research Council, 2004, Assessing the National Streamflow Information Program.

http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/nasreport/es/NRC_Report.html

National Research Council, 2012, Preparing for the third decade of the National Water-Quality Assessment Program: National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 185 p.

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13464

National Research Council, 1990, A Review of the U.S.G.S. National Water-Quality Assessment Pilot Program: National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 153 p.

http://books.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=1565&page=113

National Research Council, 1994, National Water-Quality Assessment Program: The challenge of national synthesis: National Academy Press, 1994, Washington, D.C., 51 p.

National Research Council, 2002, Opportunities to improve the U.S.G.S. National Water-Quality Assessment Program: National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 238 p.

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10267

Reviews by the Government Accountability Office

U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2004, Environmental Information: Status of Federal Data Programs That Support Ecological Indicators.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05376.pdf>

Reviews by Previous ACWI Workgroups and Task Forces:

Report of the Streamgaging Task Force to the Advisory Committee on Water Information, 2002.

http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/taskforce/task_force.html

Circular 1192, External Task Force Review of the U.S. Geological Survey Federal-State Cooperative Water Program, August 1999.

<http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/circ1192/>

2004 Task Force to Review the USGS Cooperative Water Program (this Task Force was established to assess the effectiveness of the USGS in addressing recommendations of the 1999 external Coop Program review Task Force).

<http://acwi.gov/coop2004/CoopTFRpt.pdf>

Other External Reviews:

Flood Management Benefits of USGS Streamgaging Program, National Hydrologic Warning Council, 2006.

http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/pubs/Flood_Management_benefits_complete.pdf