

Monitoring Challenges Work Group Conference Call July 8, 2013

Roll Call:

Peter Evans, ICWP	Ben Pratt, SRBC	Chris Reimer, NGWA
Pixie Hamilton, USGS	Doug McLaughlin, NCASI	Fred Bloetscher, AWWA
Mike Norris, USGS	Marie Garsjo, ACWI-SOS	Lori Caramanian, DOI
Eric Evenson, USGS	Dave Carlton, ASFPM	Steve Dye
Mike Yurewicz, USGS	Judy Campbell-Bird, ACWI-NLC	John Wells, ACWI-SWRR
Kim Martz, USGS	Bob Goldstein, EPRI	Dwayne Young, EPA
Robert Mason, USGS	Darrell Osterhoudt, ASDWA	

Short-term recommendations were submitted to Anne Castle, Lori Caramanian, Bill Werkheiser, and Jared Bales.

Lori Caramanian commended the group on the draft report noting their efforts are reflected in the document. Lori commented that Anne Castle is appreciative of the work the group is doing. Initial reactions include:

- Background is strong
- Guiding principles are the right set. The words may need to be fine-tuned.
- More discussion on the research section
- Overall, the recommendations look good.

Lori commented that she feels the group is going in the right direction, and she looks forward to the long-term recommendations. Lori will forward editorial comments from herself and Anne Castle for the group to review. Peter, responding on behalf of the work group, responded that he looks forward to their comments and suggestions. The group will get started once the comments have been received.

Bob Goldstein asked how Anne Castle will use the document.

- Lori Caramanian responded that the document is a recommendation of the ad Hoc group. As part of the official process, the document needs to go to the full ACWI committee for approval. The Department will use the document for decision-making issues.
- Eric Evenson commented that we are in the process of formalizing budgets for this year and next. Each part of the budget process is reviewed to determine what can be accommodated and what needs to be cut. The document will help give Anne Castle guidance on decisions and budget formulation. Bob Goldstein asked if the Bureau of Reclamation has a similar document.
- Peter commented that his impression is that DOI gets a lot of input from stakeholders. He added that he suspects this is one of very few stakeholder groups that can provide this advice or that has been asked by the Department to give guidance. This is a remarkable opportunity to a diverse group of stakeholders.

- Lori Caramanian – In the normal process, stakeholders provide input individually. The benefit of this effort is that it provides a stronger backbone with input coming in collectively from a group of stakeholders.

Bob Goldstein commented that in his opinion the document is bland except for where it relates to specific USGS projects. More specifics are needed.

Peter Evans commented that with sequestration and other pressures on budgets, he hopes the document will have lasting value as USGS thinks about their budget.

Eric Evenson provided additional background information to Lori and Bob, noting that the final strategic plan for Water was rolled out when this effort first started. The workgroup made a number of recommendations according to the strategic plan because it was mapped out that way. This may be an indicator of why it seems there is little background information. There may be ways to bring more detail in to the report.

Doug McLaughlin agreed with Eric regarding the strategic plan. He asked Lori Caramanian if she has some sense for what scale would be the most useful and how the group can move toward more specific details. Lori responded that the group should not move too far into the weeds – do not get too specific about the project level. Eric added that digging too far down opens up other issues that would need to be addressed. His recommendation is to keep the document more general. Too fine a scale puts pressure on the workgroup to learn all the details of projects. Doug added that the strategic plan for him has been important in getting to the next level of details.

Review of document and discussion of initial reactions -

- ***Quote in principles and requirements*** – Lori commented that the principles and requirements don't have much to do with USGS. She noted that the footnote is incorrect. The principles and requirements are not open for public review, they are final.
- ***Uncertainty and Risk section of the document*** – Lori commented that the second paragraph of this section is not clear to her. What is the intent of this section?
 - Peter responded that stakeholders are aware there is uncertainty, but at a vague level. We need to understand more before making recommendations. We are trying to get a feel for the uncertainty in different situations.
 - Eric commented that the uncertainty should be tied to how the data is used.
 - John Wells commented that budget cuts are not all the same. They need to be strategic and decisions based on the science of the data. Lori responded that she likes this concept. It's plain English and may help clarify what is being said in the paragraph.
 - John added that cuts should be made where you have the least undermining of activities - minimize the damage from costly decisions. Robert Mason agreed with John's statement – it is not known what the future uses of the data might be.
 - Lori noted that her overall reaction is that this is a high-level principle that needs to be addressed on a project-level basis. Peter responded that there are so many projects, it would take a long time to learn about them all.

- **Research and Development are Fundamental to Water Science** - Lori asked about the sentence “Greater emphasis should be placed on research with tangible results...” means.
 - Peter commented that Jared spoke of 2 branches of research, curiosity-driven research and applied research. Both are important in a science agency. Applied research is more tangible, it’s working science. If one had to give up something in a shrinking budget, it would be curiosity-driven research. Lori commented that “tangible” may not be the right word. We want science that informs decisions versus curiosity-based research. Lori added that it might be important to note that curiosity-driven research is important in the long term. We need to address the reality of long-term smaller budgets. Sequestration is not a one-year issue. Keep this in mind.

Lori commented that these are good recommendations.

Peter commented that the group has about 3 months to polish the document and get it to ACWI for full approval. He added that the group has discussed adding graphics and sidebars to the report.

Lori commented that she is appreciative of today’s discussion. Peter commented that the group has put in a large amount of sustained effort and depends on USGS’ unbiased science. He reiterated “thanks” to Anne Castle for the opportunity. Lori replied that Anne values their input.

Peter – our next meeting is scheduled for July 22. Lori commented that she will work on getting more detailed comments to the group.

Peter – for our next meeting

- Comments expected from Lori and Anne Castle
- We have comments from Jared and the program coordinators
- Add long-term recommendations back into the report and finalize them

Marie Garsjo volunteered to work on editing the long-term recommendations (from the June 25 draft).

Peter Evans and John Wells will work on the comments received from Anne Castle and Lori Caramanian. An updated draft and agenda will be completed by July 19.

Eric Evenson commented that it is important to make sure the explanations put into the report are understandable by higher-ups. You want them to buy-in and understand your point. Make sure they know that the group worked from the strategic plan.

Chris Reimer volunteered to help edit the document, but has not seen Jared’s comments.

ACTION – Wendy to forward Jared’s comments.