

Minutes
Subcommittee on Ground Water Meeting/Teleconference
Monday, July 20, 2015

Participants: Bill Cunningham, Lauren Schapker, Cary Betz, Chuck Job, Mary Musick, Dave Wunsch, Jeff Davis, Daryll Pope, Gary Rowe, Mike Wireman, John LaFave, Rick Copeland

Agenda: Agenda was approved without revision.

Previous Minutes: Minutes from June 15th meeting was approved without revision.

Announcements: Bill announced Bob is on vacation.

Status Report NGWMN Cooperative Agreement: Daryll provided a progress report on the status of creating the competitive grant program and noted that progress continues on getting an RFP ready for release. At this point, the SOGW is targeting the end of September for release of the RFP. The competitive grant process would be open to all states.

In terms of the non-competitive agreements with existing providers, six agreements have been submitted, and two have been awarded to Montana and Utah. The remaining four are still working through the process, and the delays in processing are largely out of USGS hands at this point.

Daryll also made sure to reiterate that many of the delays in the RFP process are due to paperwork associated with the creation of a new program. In the future, the number of delays will be far fewer upon simply renewing the program.

There was discussion among the group as to what role the SOGW would play in reviewing proposals submitted. Daryll said that role is currently unclear, as the technical evaluation process is still being developed. Bill noted the Program Board will be taking the lead in the RFP review process.

Status Report Water Quality Pilots: Daryll noted he will follow-up with Utah, considering they were recently recipients of a non-competitive agreement.

Mike Wireman commented that New England has recently completed another round of sampling and asked that they be contacted for an update.

Status Report NGWMN Portal: Daryll gave the SOGW an overview of recent updates made to the portal, as Jessica was on travel. He highlighted her efforts to draft a tip sheet on web services. The tip sheet will detail the types of data that are required of providers and Daryll noted this tip sheet will be very helpful for those replying to RFPs this fall. John LaFave and Dave Wunsch volunteered to review the tip sheet.

Daryll discussed another round of changes to the portal that will contain enhanced construction information, including screens and casing information. The changes will be released in the next update. He also highlighted the ability for regular users of the portal to now be able to save lists so they can easily reload new data. They will also soon be able to create bookmarks to save frequently used filters.

Upgrades to the groundwater mark-up language service are currently being tested and will also be released in the next update. Tip sheets will be available under a new data providers tab to be released by the end of July.

ACWI Annual Meeting & SOGW In-Person Meeting: Bill had hoped to co-locate the ACWI annual meeting with the SOGW in-person meeting, but given uncertainty around the date of the ACWI meeting, the SOGW will target the week of August 31st for its meeting.

Bill noted they will work to avoid the Labor Day travel crunch in scheduling the meeting.

FY2016 Appropriations Update: Lauren gave the SOGW an update on the status of the FY2016 Interior-Environment Appropriations bill, highlighting challenges facing passage of the bill due to controversial amendments that required the bill to be pulled from the floor in the House. She discussed the most likely scenario upon return from the August recess is a short-term CR, while a long-term budget agreement is worked out between House and Senate.

Bill noted to the group that because the NGWMN was funded in last year's budget agreement, any continuing resolution would continue that funding, so the Network is in a good position to receive funding for FY2016.

New Work Item: Given the progress made on the portal and cooperative agreements, Bill suggested the SOGW move to items listed in the parking lot, beginning with continuous data.

He provided an overview of the issue of real time or continuous data, noting most data is currently uploaded to the portal as a single daily statistic. He highlighted the merits of continuous data, but also noted that groundwater data tends to change so slowly that he is unsure whether the need is there.

The SOGW weighed in with a preference for maintaining the current approach until a need is identified to move toward continuous data. Dave Wunsch noted the priority should be placed on getting more wells into the network, rather than more data from existing wells, which Mary Musick concurred. She also expressed concerns that continuous data could compromise performance of the portal and that data providers could be contacted directly if there is a need for more frequent data.

Mary had additional questions about the frequency of calibration by the sensors collecting the data and whether or not more frequent data could also compromise quality of the data provided.

Gary mentioned that the Water Quality Monitoring Council is facing a similar issue and experiencing challenges on the software side. He noted they can receive data from yesterday, but not the present day, which would likely be sufficient for groundwater data.

Bill asked that the item be left open for additional comments from SOGW members.

Outreach Report: Dave Wunsch discussed the AASG meeting from June, where a panel on the NGWMN was presented. The session was well-received by 40-50 attendees and focused on not only the current status of the Network, but also featured presentations from pilot states.

Mary noted the draft agenda is almost done for the GWPC Annual Forum and announced that there will be a session on water monitoring, where Daryll will present on the NGWMN. Sandy Eberts will also be in attendance, presenting on nutrient results and the NAWQA program.

Bill announced that the NGWA agenda for the Expo in December is now online, and the abstracts deadline for the NGWA Summit scheduled for next March is 9/13.

Other Activities: Bill asked that the SOGW provide any feedback on additional parking lot items to be added to future agendas. Multiple SOGW participants expressed an interest in discussing GRACE satellite data on a future call and to hear a presentation from someone at NASA. SOGW has questions about GRACE's pixels and the coarseness of the data, as well as how it may work with the NGWMN.

Bill will work to identify the appropriate speaker from NASA to present to the SOGW at a future date.

Adjournment: The SOGW adjourned at 12:53 ET with the next meeting scheduled via teleconference on August 17th, 2015.