

Terms of Reference

Date 4/22/2010 Revised

I. Official designation and authority.

The Sustainable Water Resources Roundtable is a subgroup of the Advisory Committee on Water Information. Hence, the Roundtable is part of the Water Information Coordination Program mandated by OMB Memorandum No. M-92-01, dated December 10, 1991. The Roundtable reports to the ACWI and operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as outlined in this Terms of Reference.

II. Purpose, background, scope, and functions.

A. Purpose.

The purpose of the Roundtable is to provide an open forum for exchanging ideas and information to foster collaboration on ways to better manage and use water resources sustainably for the benefit of current and future generations. Roundtable participants are committed to interdisciplinary, inter-jurisdictional, and cross-ownership collaboration that identifies and supports national, state, and field-level activities to sustain water resources. Roundtable discussions and activities will focus in part on criteria, indicators, and methods for assessing the sustainability of water resources, as well as exploring, promoting, and improving how this information is used to promote sustainable water resource management.

B. Background.

The Sustainable Water Resources Roundtable is one of a number of on-going efforts to develop ways of collecting, organizing, and using information on conditions and trends to promote sustainable development. The Roundtable grew from the Interagency Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators, which published the report *Sustainable Development in the United States; an Experimental Set of Indicators*. The Roundtable has also benefited from the experience of similar Roundtables on forests, rangelands, and minerals and energy.

State governments, communities, corporations and nongovernmental organizations have also independently undertaken studies on the development of sustainability indicators. This Roundtable will discuss ways to coordinate and integrate the results of these various efforts so that the indicators and related data can be made accessible and useful to people in a wide range of contexts.

C. Scope.

In practice, the scope of the Roundtable's activities and accomplishments will depend on the initiatives and priorities of the participants, as well as the availability of resources. To date, the Roundtable has:

- Developed a framework for understanding indicators of sustainable water management;
- Contributed to the development of a list of national-level ecological, social, and economic criteria and indicators that characterize the sustainability of water resources and their uses;
- Identified data sets that can be used to illustrate the criteria and indicators;

- Contributed to the National Environmental Status and Trends project on national indicators; and,
- Identified priority research needs to better characterize and improve the sustainability of the Nation's water resources

The Roundtable will continue to refine its contributions in these areas and may explore other issues important to sustainable water resource management.

D. Functions.

The specific functions and tasks of the Roundtable include the following:

1. To serve as a national forum for sharing information and promoting responsibility and research for sustaining the Nation's water and related land resources. The Roundtable is not a decision-making body, but rather an opportunity to engage individuals representing diverse groups, organizations, interests, and backgrounds;
2. To identify and describe criteria, indicators, and methods that characterize the sustainability of the Nation's water resources; to share information about data availability and quality, data gaps, and how best to acquire desired information; and to share perspectives about trends affecting the Nation's water and related land resources that have policy or other coordination implications;
3. To regularly consult with the other roundtables on forestry, rangelands, and minerals about common considerations and programs;
4. To conduct outreach activities to inform others about the findings, recommendations and activities of the Roundtable and to provide an opportunity for interested groups to participate in the Roundtable and,
5. To annually report progress of the Roundtable to the Advisory Committee on Water Information.

III. Implementation:

A. Roundtable Participation

- The Roundtable recognizes the importance of having a broad range of interests represented among its participants and will seek to achieve and maintain this diversity.
- The Roundtable consists of representatives of federal, tribal and state agencies, as well as diverse national organizations, companies and individuals committed to sustaining the Nation's water and related resources.
- Participation in the Roundtable and any of its work groups and functions is open to all interested parties and is intended to be inclusive of a wide range of interests.

B. Roundtable Work Groups

- The Roundtable accomplishes much of its work through work groups that seek to understand issues, assess information, define concepts, identify needs, develop reports, and conduct outreach.

- Participation in a Roundtable work group is voluntary and provides opportunities for participants to focus on high priority tasks important to the Roundtable, individual participants, or participating organizations. Participation in work groups requires ongoing, consistent involvement and representation.
- Formation of work groups occurs either during regularly scheduled Roundtable meetings or by approval of the Steering Committee between meetings.

C. Guiding principles

The Roundtable is a self-directed body whose operation and decisions will be governed by the following guiding principles:

1. **Consensus:** Roundtable actions in general will be governed by consensus decision-making, indicating the general acceptance and/or support of participants.
2. **Diversity:** Fundamental to the Roundtable is the participation of individuals representing diverse interests and organizations; hence, Roundtable actions will reflect diverse participation.
3. **Consistency:** the Roundtable will strive to build a web of consistency in thought and action in its actions, findings, and recommendations.
4. **Scientific and Technical Accuracy:** The Roundtable will strive to incorporate the most current and scientifically accurate knowledge.
5. **Feasibility:** The Roundtable will focus on information, methods, approaches, or actions that have a realistic expectation of implementation.

D. Role of Steering Committee, Co-Chairs and Facilitator.

The Steering Committee is the Roundtable's governing body. By consensus or when necessary, majority vote of participating members, it guides, directs and leads Roundtable activities in conformance with these terms of reference. Participation in the SWRR is open to all. Members of the Steering Committee serve at the pleasure of the full body and may be considered self removed after six months of non participation or by a two-thirds vote of that body. Any member may nominate a person to serve on the committee.

The SWRR has collectively identified and established two types of Steering Committee positions: two or three co-chairs and a facilitator. Each acts as an agent and advocate of the Steering Committee and the Roundtable, providing the committee and the Roundtable leadership, support and guidance. The committee, co-chairs and facilitator do not set the agenda of the Roundtable, but rather facilitate a process for the Roundtable to establish its own agenda and then facilitate and monitor the accomplishment of that agenda.

Steering Committee members:

- Play an active role in leadership of the Roundtable
- Act as Roundtable advocates and spokespersons, promoting its agenda, accomplishments and findings and when possible support fund raising for the SWRR through their own organization, and contacts
- Promote and maintain a constructive and respectful Roundtable work environment, striving for consensus on committee decisions

The Steering Committee, in guiding, directing and leading the Roundtable:

- Ensures that activities and products fairly represent Roundtable interests and work
- Seeks to broaden participation in the Roundtable from governmental, business, environmental, public interest, academic, professional association and other organizations
- Identifies services that other organizations may contribute to Roundtable operations
- Develops relationships with programs in other organizations so that Roundtable activities complement those of its partners
- Identifies and works with organizations to convene and co-sponsor Roundtable meetings throughout the nation
- Charters and guides work groups in response to Roundtable initiatives
- Publishes an annual report of its activities to inform, educate and engage people in pursuit of sustainable water management

The co-chairs and facilitator:

- Play an active role in leadership of the Steering Committee, facilitating committee discussions and decisions
- Develop and manage a budget, including solicitation of funding, to provide resources for Roundtable operations
- Develop and monitor the progress of an ongoing Roundtable work program
- Manage and give final approval of all materials posted to the SWRR Web site or published as SWRR-authored materials

Co-chairs. A candidate for co-chair must be an active member of the Steering Committee and must be nominated and seconded for the position by committee members. Upon an initial 30-day notice to members, the Steering Committee elects a co-chair to a two-year term or to fill out the term of an open position by a simple majority vote. If no candidate receives a majority vote, the election must be decided by a runoff vote between the top two candidates. One co-chair, each, shall be representative of the federal and non-federal sectors. The terms of the co-chairs shall be staggered and may be renewed by majority vote of the Steering Committee. At least one co-chair must be employed by an organization affiliated with ACWI.

Facilitator. The co-chairs jointly appoint a facilitator subject to approval of the Steering Committee. In addition to the duties shared with the co-chairs, the facilitator is responsible for:

- Fundraising
- Organizing and coordinating meeting and teleconferencing events
- Facilitating communication among Steering Committee members and Roundtable participants
- Serving as liaison between the Steering Committee, co-chairs and funding sources

The co-chairs shall approve facilitator compensation and reimbursement of expenses on a basis agreed to by a consensus or majority vote of the Steering Committee.

IV Participation, Duties, and Guidelines:

Roundtable participants are expected to contribute to the workings of the Roundtable by contributing in at least one of many different roles:

1. Attend meetings where participants will have the opportunity to share information, ideas, and views with other Roundtable participants and to assist in documenting the discussions.

2. Participate in conference calls to plan or discuss Roundtable and/or work group activities.
3. Share information internally with the participating organization and externally with appropriate constituency groups.
4. Carry out activities and report results, prepare presentations, and otherwise disseminate information.
5. Help prepare, edit, or review written reports by the Roundtable and workgroups.
6. Contribute resources in staff, money, or materials in support of the Roundtable.
7. Actively recruit new members and supporters for the Roundtable
8. Participants may serve on the Steering Committee or as a Co-chair

Participants other than the professional facilitator receive no pay or allowances by reason of their service on the Roundtable.

Revised Draft Pending ACWI Approval