

Task Force Issues

During the first meeting of the Task Force in October 1998, the Task Force reviewed the Terms of Reference to understand and outline the scope of their work. Once the Task Force understood the scope of their charge from the Terms of Reference, they spent time brainstorming other potential issues to consider as part of their deliberations. The list of additional potential issues follows:

Additional Potential Issues Determined by the Task Force for Consideration

- A. Is the Cooperative Water Program adequately supporting user needs in the areas of surface- and ground-water quality, quantity, and use information and decision-support systems?
 1. What are the practical and “ideal” networks, and how close to ideal is the current network?
 2. What process can ensure network preservation and stability?
 3. Is there a proper balance among the disciplines?
 4. Do data measurement, analysis, and reporting meet user needs?
 5. Is the Cooperative Water Program generating new technology needed to address complex resource management problems?
- B. Has there been a formal (written) analysis of contracting procedures?
- C. Project Selection
 - Review WRD Memorandum 95.44 for relevance
 - Consider establishing an outside review panel
 - Resource availability
 - Lead agency selection
 - Expansion of scientific knowledge base
 - Compliance with USGS mandate from Congress
 - Compliance with strategic plan
- D. Conduct of Work
 - Outsource—public/private
—“best and brightest”
 - Quality-control methods
 - Multi-year project budgets
 - Use of in-kind services
 - Interim project reports with status of project and data
 - Release of preliminary data
 - USGS/Cooperator relationship
- E. Relationships
 - Feedback—(customer satisfaction)
 - Private users
 - Participants
 - Scheduled reviews—responsiveness summary
 - Progress reporting
 - Cooperator and public
 - Collaboration—enabling environment
 - Training
 - Transfer of knowledge
 - Involvement of non-Cooperators
 - New partners
 - Memoranda of Understanding with Professional Societies
 - Joint project development
 - Nonduplication
 - Cost/benefit discussion
 - Alternate funding sources
- F. Data Access
 - Access to all data (consider proprietary data)
 - Water-quantity data base
- G. Data Standards
 - Define/set standards
 - Quality Assurance (QA) criteria
 - USGS QA on non-USGS data
 - “Certification” of local data
- H. Funding, Cost, and Products of Cooperative Water Program
 - Multi-year project planning and funding (adequacy)
 - Projects need cost-value analysis (efficiency)
 - Alternative sources of funding (for example, in kind, private?)
 - Overhead costs!
 - Are current products understandable, usable, accessible, and do current products meet Cooperator needs?
 - Delivery of timely, quality products (review process)

TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES

The Task Force was very proactive in obtaining information about the Cooperative Water Program from a wide variety of sources. The Task Force held meetings in USGS offices and met with USGS staff; had panel discussions with representatives of agencies participating in the Cooperative Water Program; had a panel discussion with users of the products resulting from the Cooperative Water Program; had panel discussions with private sector consultants relating to the issue of competition with the private sector; reviewed

paper documents of policy statements, financial data, and project-description information relating to the Cooperative Water Program; and conducted numerical and verbal surveys of agencies participating in the Cooperative Water Program to determine the effectiveness of the Cooperative Water Program.

Task Force Structure

The Task Force divided itself into three subgroups to facilitate information gathering and deliberations.

The subgroups were aligned with the four elements of Scope in the Terms of Reference: Subgroup 1 focused on the “Mission” of the Cooperative Water Program; Subgroup 2 focused on “Prioritization” and “Conduct of Work” in the Cooperative Water Program; and Subgroup 3 focused on the “Products” of the Cooperative Water Program. The membership of each subgroup is listed in table 2.

Table 2. Task Force subgroup membership

Mission Subgroup	Prioritization and Conduct of Work Subgroup	Products Subgroup
Craig Albertsen	Ed Burkett	Tom Bruns
Thomas Baumgardner	Fred Ogden	Jim Enote
Dick Burton	Don Phelps	Wendall McCurry
Randall Duncan	Jonathan Price	Dave Pope
Fred Lissner	Larry Rowe	Alan Vicory
	Earl Smith	Leslie Wedderburn
	Jim Shotwell	
	Charles Spooner	
	Don Woodward	

Task Force Meetings

The Task Force held five meetings during the period of existence established by the ACWI—September 1998 to June 1999. Meeting minutes for each of the five meetings, including the meeting agendas, are provided in the Appendix, Section B (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/b/index.html>). The meeting locations and dates are listed in table 3.

Table 3. Task Force meeting locations and dates

Meeting Location	Meeting Dates
Reston, Virginia	October 14–15, 1998
Denver, Colorado	January 25–27, 1999
Tucson, Arizona	March 24–26, 1999
Troy, New York	May 5–7, 1999
Chicago, Illinois	June 28–30, 1999

The first meeting in October 1998 was held at the USGS headquarters in Reston, Virginia. The primary purpose of the meeting was for the Task Force to gain a better understanding of the USGS, the Water Resources Division (WRD), and the Cooperative Water Program. The Task Force reviewed the Terms of Reference to understand their charge, elected a Chairperson (Larry Rowe) and a Vice-Chairperson (Fred Lissner), and spent time brainstorming potential issues related to the Cooperative Water Program that might be considered in addition to those specified in the Terms of Reference.

The second, third, and fourth meetings were held at USGS District Offices in Denver, Colorado; Tucson, Arizona; and Troy, New York, respectively. The meetings were structured to provide the Task Force with (1) a “field” perspective from District personnel of how the Cooperative Water Program is operated, (2) interaction with Cooperators who participate in the program, (3) interaction with individuals and groups that use Coop-

erative Water Program products, and (4) interaction with individuals and groups who could speak to the issue of competition with the private sector.

Each of these District meetings included a presentation by the District Chief that explained the District's Cooperative Water Program and the primary water-resources issues of interest. The Arizona meeting also included a presentation by the Florida District Chief about the Florida District Cooperative Water Program. In addition, there were topical presentations by USGS staff in response to Task Force requests for specific information. A list of the topical presentations is presented in table 4. Each of the three District meetings included two different panel discussions with the Task Force. The panels consisted of individuals who could provide the Task Force with an "outside" perspective of different aspects of the Cooperative Water Program. The panels are described in more detail below. Each meeting included time for the Task Force to discuss the information it was gathering, to develop preliminary findings and recommendations, and to begin writing the final report. A considerable amount of time during the New York meeting was used to develop consensus findings and recommendations.

The fifth meeting of the Task Force was held near Chicago, Illinois to finalize the Task Force's findings and recommendations and to complete the final report.

Panel Discussions

Each of the three District meetings included two different panel discussions with the Task Force. Each panel included five to seven individuals, and the discussion lasted about 2.5 hours. The minutes of each meeting, which are provided in the Appendix, Section B, contain a list of the individuals that participated in each panel and a summary of the panel discussions. (Section B also is on the World Wide Web at <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/b/index.html>.)

At each of the meetings, a panel of individuals representing cooperating agencies that participate in the Cooperative Water Program was convened to provide the Cooperator perspective of the Cooperative Water Program to the Task Force. A list of prepared questions was used to guide the Task Force's discussion with the Cooperators. The list of questions, which the Task Force called a "verbal survey", is included in the meeting minutes in the Appendix, Section B (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/b/index.html>). The questions that are in bold print are the

questions that the Task Force focused on in their discussion with the Cooperator panel.

The purpose of the second panel discussion held at each of the District meetings varied slightly. At the Denver meeting, the panel consisted of individuals representing organizations that were not currently participating in the Cooperative Water Program but were using products resulting from the Cooperative Water Program. This panel provided the Task Force with information relating to the types of products used, the value of the products, and suggestions for improving the products. A set of prepared questions was used to guide the discussion. The list of questions is included in the meeting minutes provided in the Appendix, Section B (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/b/index.html>).

At the Arizona and New York meetings, the second panel focused on determining the appropriate role of the USGS in conducting projects as part of the Cooperative Water Program and on the issue of competition with the private sector. The individuals on these panels were from the private sector and represented private consulting firms that performed water-related work. These panels provided the Task Force with information on whether competition with the private sector is an issue and the magnitude of the issue. Additionally, the panels provided information on their perspective of the appropriate role for the USGS in performing projects as part of the Cooperative Water Program and suggested criteria for determining the appropriateness of projects for inclusion in the Cooperative Water Program. A set of prepared questions was used to guide the discussion. The list of questions is included in the meeting minutes provided in the Appendix, Section B (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/b/index.html>).

One additional panel discussion took place at the Arizona meeting. This panel consisted of four USGS managers. This panel discussion took place after the panel discussion with the private sector consultants on the subject of competition with the private sector. The purpose of this panel discussion was to provide the Task Force the opportunity to ask questions of USGS staff about the issue of competition with the private sector.

Topical Briefings

The Task Force received topical briefings, primarily at their request, on various subjects from USGS staff to

obtain specific information and to gain a better understanding of the topic in question. A list of these topical briefings is provided in table 4. There are no topical

presentations listed for the New York and Chicago meetings because there were no topical presentations given.

Table 4. Topical briefings

Topic	Presenter
Reston, Virginia Meeting	
Overview of the USGS and the Water Resources Division	Robert Hirsch, Chief Hydrologist
Division Level Overview of the Cooperative Water Program	James Peters, Program Officer
Regional-District Overview of the Cooperative Water Program	William Carswell, Regional Hydrologist, Northeastern Region
WRD Programs and their Relation to the Cooperative Water Program	Robert Hirsch, Chief Hydrologist
Denver, Colorado Meeting	
Overview of the National Water Quality Monitoring Council	Charles Spooner, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Overview of the Streamgaging Task Force	Donald Woodward, U. S Department of Agriculture
How a Cooperative Water Program Project is Developed	Douglas Cain, Associate Chief, Colorado District
How Indirect Costs are Determined	William Horak, Chief, Colorado District
Water Resources Division Products	Greg Allord, Chief, Publications Management Program
Water Resources Division Data Bases	John Briggs, National Water Information System
National Water-Quality Laboratory Tour	Robert Williams, Chief, National Water-Quality Laboratory
Tucson, Arizona Meeting	
Comparison of Indirect Costs Between Districts	John Vecchioli, Chief, Florida District
Ideas for Improving Report Timeliness	Nick Melcher, Chief, Arizona District
Tribal Perspective on the Cooperative Water Program	James Enote, Pueblo of Zuni, New Mexico
Fiscal Year 2000 USGS and WRD Budget	Robert Hirsch, Chief Hydrologist
Development of New Technologies and Methods	Robert Hirsch, Chief Hydrologist

1994 U.S. Geological Survey Customer Satisfaction Survey of Cooperators

In 1994, the USGS conducted an informal survey of organizations participating in the Cooperative Water Program. The purpose of this pilot survey was to assess existing perceptions of customer service and to provide input to preliminary customer service standards for the Cooperative Water Program. To get a broad sampling of the Cooperator community, each District (State) office sent a questionnaire containing 11 questions to two Cooperators. The results of this survey were provided to the Task Force and served as background information about Cooperator satisfaction with the

Cooperative Water Program. The results of this survey are presented in the Appendix, Section C (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/c/index.html>).

Task Force Verbal Survey of Cooperators

The Task Force developed a list of questions about the Cooperative Water Program that they could use to interview Cooperators to obtain the Cooperator's perception of the Cooperative Water Program. The questions are presented in the Appendix, Section D (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/c/>

index.html). There were questions related to each of the four elements of Scope (mission, prioritization, conduct of work, and products) in the Task Force Terms of Reference. Each Task Force member then used the questions to do a verbal survey interview of at least two Cooperators. The Task Force members took notes of their interviews, and the information resulting from the verbal survey interviews is summarized and presented in the Appendix, Section D (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/d/index.html>).

Task Force Numerical Survey of Cooperators

To get a broad level of concrete feedback from Cooperators about the Cooperative Water Program, the Task Force developed and implemented a numerical survey. The survey consisted of a series of questions in which the Cooperators could rate aspects of the Cooperative Water Program on a scale that ranged from “excellent” to “poor” or “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The survey questionnaire was mailed to 400 randomly selected Cooperators across the country. In FY 1998, 1,287 Cooperators participated in the Cooperative Water Program; about one-third of the Cooperators

received a questionnaire. The number of Cooperators receiving the survey in any State was in proportion to the number of Cooperators participating in the program and the size of the Cooperative Water Program in that State. About 170 Cooperators responded and returned a completed survey. The numerical questionnaire and the results of the survey are presented in the Appendix, Section E (<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/e/index.html>).

The numerical survey was conducted in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act. The survey was approved by the Department of the Interior and the OMB and received the authorization number OMB No. 1028–0071; Expiration Date: 2–28–2002.

Informational Documents

The Task Force asked for and received numerous paper documents related to the Cooperative Water Program. These documents provided information on such things as USGS policy, funding for the Cooperative Water Program, and Cooperative Water Program project information. A list of the most important documents the Task Force received is provided in table 5.

Table 5. Informational documents provided to the Task Force

1. Water Resources Division Memorandum No 98.21—Priority Issues for the Federal-State Cooperative Water Program, Fiscal Year 1999
2. Water Resources Division Memorandum No 95.44—Avoiding Competition with the Private Sector
3. Water Resources Division Memorandum No 92.14—Authority for conducting water-resources investigations
4. Water Resources Division Memorandum No 84.21—Hydrologic Activities to be excluded from the Federal-State Cooperative Water Program
5. Strategic Directions for the Water Resources Division, 1998–2008, U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 99-249
6. A new evaluation of the USGS Streamgaging Network: A report to Congress, November 30, 1998
7. Water Resources Division National Training Center Course listing and level of participation by USGS employees, Cooperators, and other Federal employees
8. Funding report, by District, of all types of funding received by the District in FY1998
9. Results of the 1994 U.S. Geological Survey Customer Satisfaction Survey of Cooperators
10. USGS and WRD assessment policies, examples of indirect cost calculations, and a summary of indirect costs for each District
11. A listing of all active cooperating organizations in FY1998 and/or FY1999
12. FY1999 Cooperative Water Program projects related to the Clean Water Action Plan
13. FY1999 WRD activities and projects related to Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)
14. Correspondence from American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC) and American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) related to competition with the private sector

Table 5. Informational documents provided to the Task Force

15. Detail Cooperative Water Program project descriptions for the Colorado, Arizona, Florida, and New York Districts for projects that were active in FY1998 and/or FY1999
16. A list of Cooperative Water Program project titles in all Districts for all projects that were active in FY1998 and/or FY1999

The WRD memorandums listed in table 5 are presented in the Appendix, Section F, [://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/f/index.html](http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/circ1192/appendix/f/index.html).

Decision-Making Process

The Task Force accomplished much of their initial decision making through the subgroups. The subgroups were tasked with developing findings and recommendations related to their area of emphasis. The findings and recommendations were based on the synthesis of a wide range of information the Task Force received, such as the informational documents list in table 5, the documents provided in the Appendix, and the verbal input received from the panel discussions. At the New York and Chicago meetings, each subgroup presented their preliminary findings and recommendations to the entire Task Force for comment, revision, and acceptance or rejection. The resulting findings and recommendations all have the consensus acceptance and support of the entire Task Force. These consensus findings and recommendations are presented in the section “Review of the Cooperative Water Program.”

REVIEW OF THE COOPERATIVE WATER PROGRAM

The Task Force divided its efforts into several areas of focus. Subgroups were formed to study (1) the “Mission” of the Cooperative Water Program, (2) the “Prioritization” of project selections and “Conduct of Work”, and (3) the “Products” produced through the Cooperative Water Program.

Mission

The subgroup studying the Mission of the Cooperative Water Program began by investigating the Mission of the USGS and the WRD. The Mission of the USGS is “...to serve the Nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and min-

eral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life” (U.S. Geological Survey, 1999a).

The Federal government has a clear responsibility and interest in cooperating with State, Tribal, regional and local governments on water-related issues. The national interest is a combination of broad, regional to national concerns and the aggregate of common State, Tribal, and local interests. Examples of broad, regional to national concerns include regional, national, and global changes in climate and related changes in ground-water levels, stream flows, and water quality; predicting and analyzing the impacts of water-related hazards (for example, floods and droughts); and scientific understanding of how ground-water and surface-water systems function and how human activities impact these systems. These national concerns require the acquisition and maintenance of long-term data sets and the development of interpretive tools. Examples of aggregated common State, Tribal, and local interests are concerns about water availability for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and ecological needs; water quality for domestic and other uses; and impacts of floods, subsidence, and other hazards.

The document, *Strategic Directions For The Water Resources Division, 1998–2008* (U.S. Geological Survey, 1999b) establishes the principles that will guide the WRD during 1998–2008. In addition to considering changes in the program, the *Strategic Directions* identified the mission, activities, and success factors of the WRD applicable at the time and for conditions that are likely to occur during the next decade. The mission of WRD, as defined in the draft document, is “to provide reliable, impartial, timely information that is needed to understand the Nation’s water resources.” The WRD mission Statement goes on to say “WRD actively promotes the use of this information by decision-makers to: (1) minimize the loss of life and property as a result of water-related natural hazards, such as floods, droughts, and land movement; (2) effectively manage ground-water and surface-water resources for domestic, agricultural, commercial, industrial, recreational, and ecological uses; (3) protect and enhance water resources for human health, aquatic health, and environmental quality; and (4) contribute to wise physical and economic development of the