

TASK FORCE CHARTER AND DIRECTION

The work of the Task Force was primarily directed by three documents. The first and most important document is the charter for the Task Force called the “Terms of Reference.” The second document is guidance to the Task Force from an ACWI subgroup that focused on how work is conducted as part of the Cooperative Water Program, including the topics of competition with the private sector and the appropriate relationship with the private sector. The third document is a list of potential issues to examine relating to the Cooperative Water Program that was compiled by the Task Force during their first meeting.

Terms of Reference

The Task Force was established by the Terms of Reference approved at the August 1998 meeting of the ACWI. The work of the Task Force was guided by and focused on the questions identified in the “Scope” section of the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference also provides guidelines for the Task Force membership, procedures for meetings, and products that should result from the work of the Task Force. The Terms of Reference follow:

9/3/98

Advisory Committee on Water Information Task Force to Review the Federal-State Cooperative Water Program

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. Official Designation

Task Force to Review the Federal-State Cooperative Water Program (Task Force) of the Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI).

II. Purpose and Scope

A. *Purpose*—The purpose of the Task Force is to assess the effectiveness of the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) Federal-State Cooperative Water Program (Cooperative Water Program), to make recommendations, and to provide a written report of findings to the ACWI. The report from the Task Force to the ACWI will serve as the basis for the ACWI to recommend possible enhancements or

modifications to the USGS for the Cooperative Water Program.

B. *Scope*—The Task Force is requested to review the activities of the Cooperative Water Program by addressing and responding to four broad topics described below. The Task Force will have from September 1998 to June 1999 to complete its work. The Task Force will address the following four topics:

1. *Mission*—Historically, the Cooperative Water Program has been designed to develop hydrologic data and technical analysis needed to assist in meeting the USGS mission of continuously assessing the Nation’s water resources, and to provide technical assistance to State, Tribal, and local water management agencies in seeking solutions to water-resource issues of national concern through a matched funding arrangement. Is the Cooperative Water Program successfully meeting its mission? Is this mission still valid? If not, how should it be altered? Does the Cooperative Water Program adequately contribute to the broad USGS mission, while keeping abreast of emerging water-resources issues at the State and local level?
2. *Prioritization*—In Fiscal Year 1997, the Congress appropriated \$64.5 million for the Cooperative Water Program. State and local agencies provided an equal amount of matching funds plus an additional \$28.5 million of unmatched funding. Given that there is more funding available from the State and local side than there is matching Federal funding, are matching funds applied to the most important topics and issues? Is there a proper balance between funding of long-term data collection versus short-term interpretive studies? What changes could be made in the approach to project selection to help ensure maximum effectiveness for the program?
3. *Conduct of work*—Nearly all of the work performed in the Cooperative Water Program is done by USGS scientists and technicians. This arrangement is designed to enhance quality control, provide national consistency in data collection and methods of analysis, and provide a stable core of experienced water scientists nationwide. Could this arrangement be improved without sacrificing its benefits? What is the appropriate relationship with the private sector, States, universities, and so forth? What

would be the implications of altering current work arrangements on the unique qualities of the Cooperative Water Program and water management nationwide?

4. *Products*—The products developed in the Cooperative Water Program need to be useful to Cooperators and other users. These users include representatives of all levels of government, the scientific community, the private sector, and the general public. The products also fulfill national needs by building long-term national data bases, augmenting activities in other USGS programs, and providing a national picture of water resources through synthesis of information from individual projects across the country. In addition, the Cooperative Water Program advances the development and application of new approaches and methodologies relevant to water-resources issues. To what extent should the products of the Cooperative Water Program support: (1) national needs, as compared to (2) the needs of Cooperators and other information users? Are the products meeting the needs of the primary users as well as the multiple needs of ancillary parties? What changes in products should the USGS consider to strengthen the Cooperative Water Program's impact? Are there ways to further stimulate the development of new approaches and methods and to enhance the transfer of these approaches and methods to interested parties?

III. Membership

- A. The chair of the ACWI will designate up to 24 representatives to the Task Force. The Task Force shall comprise a balanced representation of Federal, regional, State, Tribal, local, and municipal government agencies, and the private sector. Membership will reflect organizations that use USGS water information, have partnerships with USGS, or have interests in the objectives of the Cooperative Water Program.
- B. The Task Force will include individuals from each of the four USGS Water Resources Division Regions.
- C. Federal membership will not exceed six representatives from the following organizations: National Weather Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency/Office of Water, and U.S. Department of the Interior. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) will be invited to participate as a nonvoting member.

- D. The Chair of the ACWI may designate up to a maximum of 18 representatives that have a balance of interests and functions. These organizations that participate on the Task Force will represent the following interests: Native Americans, environmental interest groups, industry, local government agencies, professional societies, and river-basin commissions.
- E. The Chair will be elected from non-Federal members of the Task Force. The USGS will provide the Executive Secretary for the Task Force.

IV. Meetings and Procedures

- A. The Task Force will begin activities during September 1998. The Chair will announce the date, time, and location of each meeting in advance. After the initial two- or three-day meeting, the Task Force will plan further sessions, as necessary. The Task Force report is due to the Executive Secretary of the ACWI by June 30, 1999.
- B. Representatives to the Task Force will receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Task Force. However, while away from their homes or regular place of business and in performance of service for the Task Force, non-Federal representatives will be allowed travel expenses if needed. Travel expenses will include per diem. Section 5703 of Title 5 of the United States Code describes allowances associated with this expense.
- C. Before transmitting the final report to the Director, USGS, the ACWI will announce the availability of the draft report for public review and comment in the Federal Register.
- D. The Task Force Executive Secretary will prepare and distribute to all members a summary of each meeting. Summaries of each Task Force meeting, recommendations adopted, and copies of all studies and reports issued by the Task Force will be available for public inspection on the World Wide Web and for review and copying at the following location:
Water Information Coordination Program
U.S. Geological Survey
417 National Center
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, Virginia 20192

- E. Support services shall be provided by USGS.
- F. *Authority*—The Task Force is part of the implementation of the Water Information Coordination Program mandated by OMB Memorandum No. 92–01, dated December 10, 1991. The Task Force reports to the ACWI that operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

V. Products

- A. A compilation of Task Force meeting summaries and special studies.
- B. A draft written report describing the findings of the Task Force and its recommendations.
- C. A written summary of the public comments on the draft report.
- D. An oral presentation to the ACWI of the summary findings and recommendations of the Task Force.
- E. A final written report describing the findings of the Task Force and its recommendations presented to the ACWI.
- F. Transmittal of the final report from ACWI to the USGS including any comments, or suggested enhancements, or suggested modifications of the Cooperative Water Program resulting from the ACWI review of the Task Force report.

Advisory Committee on Water Information Subgroup Guidance

In addition to the Terms of Reference, the Task Force was provided specific guidance from a subgroup of the ACWI on the issue of how work is conducted as part of the Cooperative Water Program, including the topics of competition with the private sector and the appropriate relationship with the private sector. At its August 1998 meeting, ACWI held several subgroup sessions in which the membership of the ACWI was divided into smaller groups and additional guests were invited to participate in the small groups. One group focused on the topic of “USGS Relationships with the Private Sector” especially as it related to the Cooperative Water Program. This breakout group summarized its deliberations and provided specific guidance to the Task Force on dealing with the subject of relationships with the private sector. This guidance follows.

Advisory Committee on Water Information Subgroup Guidance for the Task Force to Review the Federal-State Cooperative Water Program: Relationship with the Private Sector

Dave Carlton, representing the Association of State Flood Plain Managers cochaired this group and presented their report. Mr. Carlton is a private consultant and member of the American Consulting Engineers Council. The breakout group report and guidance is presented below:

- A. The Task Force should examine the criteria used to determine whether USGS should become involved in a specific project. This examination should include:
 1. Review of USGS Water Resources Division (WRD) Policy Memorandum No. 95.44 that contains the criteria for determining appropriate and inappropriate work.
 2. Examine the entire decision process for selecting projects.
 3. Develop a clear mechanism for obtaining public input.
 4. Develop a process for resolving conflicts about what work should be done and who should do it.
 5. Develop a process for routinely assessing the appropriate role of USGS as conditions change.
 6. Ensure that the Task Force uses an open process for conducting the review that provides public access and opportunities to provide input.
- B. Review the way USGS projects are staffed.
 1. Recommend ways to increase flexibility in staffing USGS projects.
 2. Ensure a staffing approach that provides continuity for completing, documenting, and communicating project results.
 3. Evaluate the long-term financial and other costs of using a more flexible staffing approach.
 4. Develop a process for ensuring that applied science, technology, and information developed during work efforts remain available to the public, rather than becoming proprietary.
 5. Determine the implications of contracting out on the credibility of results that are used in complex decision-making processes.
- C. Improve communications between all involved parties when issues arise. Keep these issues out of Congress and the courts.
- D. Report back regularly to the ACWI on these issues.

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