 

CWP Cooperator Roundtable Recommendations

Table of Contents & Synopsis

June 2012 Update

In the following pages, the ICWP provides a summary of the highest-rated recommendations from each of the 13 water science stakeholder “roundtable” meetings conducted since 2005 in cooperation with USGS concerning the Cooperative Water Program (CWP) that USGS implements through its Water Science Centers.

**YEAR LOCATION PAGE**

2005 Washington, DC (national) 3

2006 Austin, TX (national) 5

2007 Athens, GA (GA, NC & SC) 6

2007 Sacramento, CA (CA) 7

2007 Dubuque, IA (IL, IA, MN, MO & WI) 8

2008 Cheyenne, WY (CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD & WY) 9

2008 Cincinnati, OH (IN, KY, OH, PA & WV) 10

2008 Orlando, FL (FL) 11

2009 Philadelphia (DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, VA & WV) 12

2009 Tacoma, WA (ID, OR, WA) 14

2010 Chelmsford, MA (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI & VT) 15

2011 Washington, DC (national) 16

2012 Salt Lake City (AR, CA, CO, NV, NM, UT & WY) 17

The 13 sets of recommendations from individual meetings, the following themes have the strongest support among the CWP Cooperators:

**Budgeting**

* The Administration & Congress should support full implementation of the National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) design and increase funding to the Cooperative Water Program (CWP), thereby reducing the cost-share burden on CWP Cooperators (originally 50-50; now 30:70).

**Priorities**

* CWP should maintain both data collection and interpretative studies, but maintain long-term monitoring as a priority due to its essential role in the interpretive applications and water-resource decisions.
* CWP interpretative studies should continue to respond to the needs of local, state, and tribal cooperators, with increasing efforts to integrate and leverage CWP resources with other USGS programs (including, for example, WaterSMART and the National Water Quality Assessment (NAWQA) Programs).
* Innovative decision support tools (such as StreamStats) should remain a priority, along with innovation in remote sensing techniques (including LANDSAT) and the development of water data “portals”.

**Coordination and Communication**

* The “cornerstone” role of the CWP & NSIP should be more broadly promoted, specifically featuring their roles in the broader, national efforts to deliver reliable water data and science needed to address water resource issues and support decisions by local, state, tribal, interstate and federal agencies, and by businesses, landowners and other citizens.
* Regional and national forums—including roundtables and synthesis papers—should be promoted to enhance technical and program exchange among stakeholders; inform regional and national water issues; and more effectively anticipate future science and decision support needs.
* State/regional water monitoring councils should be more broadly promoted and utilized to enhance coordination and communication among stakeholders.

**Technical transfer**

* CWP and NSIP should increase the synergistic alignment with Cooperator capabilities, which would thereby reduce costs and potential redundancy among organizations. USGS technical training opportunities should be promoted to improve the quality and consistency of Cooperators’ independent data collection programs and to enhance the national value of all available data.

**Administrative**

* The USGS should streamline its review process for more timely release of data and interpretative results.
* Cooperator agreements that consolidate the needs and cost-share support of multiple stakeholders should be promoted to reduce the administrative burden and broaden the participation base.
* The financial basis for cost-share agreements should be more transparent (including, for example, overhead and gage-cost calculations). Input from cooperators should be solicited (as “partners”) to search for more cost-effective approaches.

1st National Stakeholders’ Roundtable   
on the   
USGS Cooperative Water Program

Held March 9, 2005, Washington, DC

On March 9, 2005 twenty-six representatives of USGS water cooperators joined fourteen managers from the U.S. Geological Survey for the first national meeting of stakeholders in the Cooperative Water Program (“CWP”). The cost-share “Cooperators” represented a cross section of the nearly 1,400 government entities at the state, local, and tribal government level who participate with the USGS in jointly funded water data collection and interpretive studies.

The meeting was co-sponsored by the USGS and the ICWP to provide an opportunity for the Cooperators to hear about the status and recent achievements of the CWP, to learn about the nearly-completed external review, to give USGS constructive feedback, and to share common ideas with each other.

**Strengths of the CWP:**

* Sound, unbiased science (science independent from policy)
* Credibility
* Ability to draw on entire agency resources
* Direction of the work is, to a large extent, locally-led but, because of quality protocols and consistency, easily transferable to other regions and translatable to the national perspective (tricky balance to maintain, but a real strength of the CWP).
* USGS is now delivering better data products and real time data with less lost data
* Quality of measurements, longevity of records, and easy accessibility of data are key strengths

**Challenges that USGS could improve on:**

* Timeliness of Products
* Highlighting existing “cooperative” effort
* Document program benefits
* Lack of state and federal budget increases to cover cost of inflation
* USGS fact sheets and communications designed to illustrate program strengths through individual applications of data and studies
* Listen to cooperators and strike appropriate balance between support for data and interpretive studies
* Expand the CWP to include other disciplines and cost-share partners, broaden funding base and participation
* Use of USGS equipment (by states) for relaying diverse information (traffic example), broaden support for CWP

**Challenges that Cooperators could improve on:**

* Proactive outreach to broaden the understanding of CWP capabilities, opportunities and benefits; be more strategic, get ahead and articulate values (as opposed to crisis response)
* Grass roots up at local level – local/county/state--talk about streamgaging, flood protection, water availability, water quality issues, talk about value of programs and real life impacts.
* Helping USGS brand itself that it is a science agency – USGS State of the Union.
* Cooperators can help set vision for multi-year program planning.
* Cooperators can collaborate with USGS on data collection and interpretive studies.
* Cooperators could organize and promote shared message, take it to Congress to request additional support for program; ICWP, WSWC, TWDB and others could use it to build support for state funds; more effective national letter from Cooperators to local and state leaders for overall support at national level for National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP).
* Incorporate working with USGS, the Administration and Congress to bring national perspectives into planning/budget process
* Coordinated efforts, more effective and more powerful – and not compete for individual piecemeal resources.
* Get more involved all stages of CWP planning, product design, implementation, and delivery.

The **final discussion** among the Cooperators resulted in these points:

* Cooperators cannot continue indefinitely to absorb more than their fair share of cost increases. USGS needs to pick up more of the increased costs.
* Both the CWP and the NSIP are in need of additional Congressional funding.
* Cooperators would like to be partners, not just payers.
* Cooperators, working at times with each other and at times with the USGS, can help with public relations, political strategy, and strategic planning. They should discuss these issues with their association members and encourage them to make their feelings known to influential groups.
* Four associations emerged as potential leaders in consolidating cooperator actions: Interstate Council on Water Policy, Western States Water Council, Association of State Floodplain Managers, and National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies. ICWP will put the notes from this meeting on their website.
* Cooperators can be a part of the work, including data collection and projects.
* USGS should give first priority to collecting water data, sufficient to support its own needs and the Cooperators’ needs, before investing heavily in interpretive studies.
* A follow-up meeting similar to this one might be helpful.

2nd National Stakeholders’ Roundtable

for the

USGS Cooperative Water Program

Held January 31-February 1, 2006 in Austin, TX

There was a very good turnout, including approximately 70 people representing Cooperators from 20 states and 45 people from USGS HQ & Water Science Centers in 18 states. The results from 5 break-out groups’ discussion of opportunities and selection of priorities are summarized below.

**What can USGS do to Improve the CWP?**

Communication with Stakeholders

* Involve the Cooperators more directly in decisions concerning use of cost-shared funds; meet annually with all Cooperators to enable them to learn about and guide priorities at national level for monitoring and studies, to improve efficient use of resources, reduce program cost and agree on CWP policies;
* Engage Cooperators more directly in open, state-by-state prioritization (Cooperator’s match rate could be based on importance of issues)
* Communicate with all stakeholders, not just the paying Cooperators

Improve Funding & Cost Containment

* Re-establish 50-50 match in the CWP
* Seek funding to fully implement NSIP as a way to bring CWP closer to a 50-50 split
* Focus on 3 biggest expense elements in reducing cost of NSIP and CWP; include Cooperators and equipment suppliers in evaluation
* More federal agencies (and other interests) should pay fair share.
* Consider in-kind credit where Cooperators provide certified operators and data.

Fund Data Collection First

* Give higher priority to data collection, while CWP capability is limited by funding, to minimize gaps in important monitoring records.

Improve Data Access

* Make internet access to data more user-friendly.

**What can Cooperators do to Improve the CWP?**

Coordinate Cooperators

* Organize and communicate better among ourselves to give USGS better understanding of Cooperators’ needs, priorities and their ability to contribute funds & in-kind.

Promote CWP Appreciation

* Organize more “state water day” events to inform Congress and other federal agency leaders
* Increase grassroots outreach to enhance awareness of the value that water resource data provides
* Give CWP and NSIP credit for data whenever it is included in reports, presentations, *etc*.

Improve CWP Efficiency

* Participate in joint working group with USGS to examine and cut program costs
* Increase in-kind contributions to decrease cost to collect data
* Consolidate smaller joint-funding agreements under a larger agreement
* Take initiative to coordinate with the USGS on funding and planning
* Take over data collection when gages are “threatened” by funding limits and provide the data to USGS (“furnished records”)

Improve CWP Funding Base

* Inform and engage more Cooperators, including local agencies, businesses and other non-traditional stakeholders, to help fund CWP & NSIP.
* Be advocate for USGS at federal level (programs & funding); inform Congress about the value that NSIP and CWP have and the need for reliable funding.
* Propose a general fund that would enable any supportive entity to contribute funding.

Southeastern Coastal States CWP  
Cooperators’ Roundtable

Held March 28-29, 2007 in Athens, GA

In conjunction with the Georgia Water Resources Conference

**Summary**: In conjunction with the 2007 meeting of the Georgia Water Resources Conference, the ICWP and USGS held the first regional CWP Cooperator’s Roundtable on the University of Georgia campus in Athens, GA. Approximately 50 participants split into two groups for a facilitated discussion of opportunities that either the USGS or the Cooperators could pursue to improve the CWP. The two groups met independently for about half an hour, one lead by Peter Evans (ICWP Executive Director) and the other by Sue Lowry (ICWP’s Chair and Administrator of the Interstate Streams Division in the Wyoming State Engineers’ Office) to respond to two questions and then prioritize the results. Sue Lowry facilitated a brief summary and discussion of the highest-ranked suggestions from the two break-out groups.

**Recommendations for USGS consideration:**

1. Improve outreach to local government, enhance USGS awareness of local issues and become a recognized participant in problem solving;
2. Projects should be designed with more frequent “results” (e.g., reports, other deliverables), especially for long-term projects;
3. Optimize the entire gaging network. Provide to local cooperators the background information so that they understand the decisions made by USGS when locating NSIP gages. Better coordination between the two programs as the local level is desirable. But having both programs is good so that some trade-offs can be made between the programs on specific gages.
4. Enhance fact sheets describing investigation results in understandable terms, focus on informing the public;
5. Anticipate next-steps and implications (e.g., for information needs, permitting, budget and other decisions) earlier in the project for future program and budget planning (e.g., design-build contracting);
6. Promote this regional approach in having discussions with the cooperators.

**Recommendations for CWP Cooperators’ consideration:**

1. Cooperators can do more to promote education/funding with Congress and the Administration. Also, look beyond the present set of supporters (e.g., to the National Association of County Officials, since in the southeast, water issues are very important and many county commissioners are very knowledgeable and would be willing to work on water issues when they are in DC or talking with their congressional contacts).
2. Develop a better understanding of the CWP role, managers, decision cycles, resources, etc and the scope of USGS capabilities.
3. Cooperators and the USGS need to work together to be more creative in financing streamgaging. New opportunities for in-kind services should be explored.
4. Invite USGS to more of the meetings where water issues are explored so they have better awareness and can contribute to the consideration of information needs and potential solutions. Cooperators can be of help in the information transfer working with USGS. Many cooperators participate in organizations beyond those with which USGS might typically participate. Cooperators should keep in mind opportunities to reach different audiences with outreach on water resources research results.

California CWP Cooperator’s Roundtable

Held May 7-8, 2007 in Sacramento, CA

In Conjunction with the Association of California Water Agencies

**Summary**: In conjunction with the spring meeting of the ACWA, the ICWP & USGS convened this Cooperator’s Roundtable in Sacramento with approximately 50 participants. Following the overview of programs and a panel discussion of Cooperator’s experience with them, the participants were divided into two groups and worked independently for about an hour, one lead by Dennis Bostad (Sweetwater Authority) and the other by Eric Senter and Greg Smith (both with California DWR) to respond to two questions and then prioritize the results. The highest-ranked suggestions from the combined results are:

**For USGS consideration:**

1. Restore 50/50 financial match (or reduce program cost, using newer hardware, software technologies, *etc*) so that Cooperators can afford more data and science;
2. More frequent meetings with groups of the Cooperators to discuss agency and program management opportunities and challenges would be very helpful; embrace Cooperators more fully as partners, sharing more of budget, staffing, other key management challenges before significant decisions need to be made; provide annual summary of projects, programs to Cooperators.
3. Provide more frequent reports on the subject and progress of interpretive studies; reduce the time required for internal review and deliver data quicker;
4. Update the statewide flood frequency statistics at gaging stations in California (last updated about 30 years ago); also update streamflow and watershed characterizations;
5. Provide additional technical assistance (e.g., facilitating access to the GOES, providing streamgage training more frequently, providing guidance and training in statistical and time series analytical methods, clarifying USGS QA/AC procedures, providing assistance to integrate data within a stream segment and reduce discrepancies, facilitating access to other published water resources data) and information (e.g., cross sections in downloadable form, data for unimpaired flows in mountain areas with tools to integrate/associate data from adjacent stations) to Cooperators; a watershed discussion among stakeholders would help promote awareness of emerging issues, shared concerns and the relevant science;
6. Add older data to online databases, provide statistical tools for analysis and interpretation;

**For CWP Cooperators’ consideration:**

1. Our legislative and congressional leaders need a better understanding of the value that the CWP and NSIP have in our ability to make intelligent decisions for our communities and in our relation with other states; also the financial burden it places on our agencies if federal funding for these programs is insufficient;
2. Organize public/media events around water issues in which USGS experts can present their science as a means to increase public awareness of water issues and the USGS contribution to understanding and solving water problems;
3. Develop a model or standard agreement for use between California state agencies and the USGS to streamline internal review (especially with the AG’s Office)
4. Take more initiative to learn CWP managers, opportunities and difficulties;
5. Co-locate staff to enhance communication and understanding between USGS and Cooperators;

Upper Mississippi River Basin States  
CWP Cooperator’s Roundtable

Held November 1-2, 2007 in Dubuque, IA

In conjunction with the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

**Summary**: In cooperation with the UMRBA, the ICWP & USGS organized this Cooperator’s Roundtable for the five Upper Mississippi River Basin States. The program included presentations by USGS staff on the purposes, history and capabilities of the CWP and some of the challenges facing it. Following those presentations and discussions, the 50+ participants divided into two groups to explore opportunities for both the USGS and the Cooperators to improve the CWP. The two groups met for about an hour, one lead by Kent Lokkesmoe (Minnesota DNR) and the other by Greg Good (Illinois EPA) to respond to two questions and prioritize the results. Those questions and the highest ranking recommendations from the combined results are**:**

**For USGS consideration:**

* Get back to 50% match and increase USGS funding for new work;
* Reduce HQ overhead cost;
* Enhance interagency coordination of data collection;
* Improve sediment monitoring and analysis program;
* Take advantage of synergy between USGS and state monitoring programs;
* Simplify and reduce cost of reports and consider a new methods for producing reports quickly, especially for small studies;
* Stay on cutting edge, advancing the available technology, and continue technology transfer to Cooperators,
* Continue pushing for more timely release of data and information on web, final and provisional;
* Hold regular, statewide meetings with Cooperator community to review needs, opportunities, priorities;

**For CWP Cooperators’ consideration:**

* Advocate full NSIP implementation and continuing increases for the CWP;
* Cooperators can/need to be more vocal with policy makers /influential people;
* Promote base funding for USGS to separate overhead from CWP cost share agreements;
* Improve accessibility of data for electronic transfer of information;
* Discuss streamgage issues and priorities with more organizations and data users more often;
* Identify and promote awareness of more sources of water data; deal with funding implication;
* Help USGS avoid CWP agreements that are too small to be cost-effective;

Upper Missouri River Basin States  
CWP Cooperators’ Roundtable 2008

Held August 26-27, 2008 in Cheyenne, Wyoming

In conjunction with the Missouri River Association of States & Tribes

**Summary**: The ICWP & USGS organized this Cooperator’s Roundtable for the five Upper Missouri River Basin States in cooperation with the MoRAST. The presentations by USGS staff on the purposes, history and capabilities of the CWP were followed by several Cooperator presentations illustrating the scientific contribution that the CWP data collection and interpretive investigations have made and the benefits they bring to state and local water management. After these discussions among about 50 participants, we divided into two groups to discuss ways that the USGS and the Cooperators could improve the CWP. The break-out groups met separately for one hour, one lead by Garland Eberle (South Dakota Chief Engineer) and the other by Tracy Streeter (Director, Kansas Water Office) to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. The highest ranking recommendations from the combined results are**:**

**What can the Cooperators do to improve the CWP?**

* Advocate full support for NSIP implementation and for the CWP, including involvement of USGS in public meetings, outreach to the news media and public and providing testimony to congressional delegations and committee hearings;
* Stay more actively involved in interpretive studies throughout design and implementation;
* Involve USGS more consistently in the exploration of issues and program/project options, use CWP data and studies more deliberately in making policy and setting priorities; and
* Initiate periodic statewide Cooperator meetings for discussion of needs, resources and opportunities.

**What can the USGS do to improve the CWP?**

* Deliver better reports to Congress and to the public concerning CWP progress, challenges and the cost involved in making decisions without sufficient data and science to plan and design intelligently;
* Anticipate future resource management and protection issues so that baseline data collection can be started earlier and more effectively;
* Be more flexible in defining the data set collected at some stations to serve actual needs at lower cost; and
* Deliver data and study results more efficiently and provide better explanation of cost and schedule.

**What can the USGS & Cooperators do to enhance the compatibility of water data collected by different agencies?**

* Establish a water data portal to help users identify and compare other useful sources of data.

Ohio River Basin States  
CWP Cooperators’ Roundtable 2008

**Held September 11-12, 2008 in Cincinnati, Ohio**

In conjunction with the Ohio River Basin Commission &   
Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission

**Overview**: This Cooperators’ Roundtable was organized in cooperation with ORSANCO by the ICWP & USGS to present CWP and NSIP national and regional updates and engage Cooperators in a discussion of their needs and their experience with the CWP. At the end of these discussions, the 45 participants split into two groups to identify options for improving the CWP. They worked separately for an hour to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. The recommendations that got the highest priority are**:**

**What can the Cooperators do to improve the CWP?**

* Inform their respective congressional delegations on the value & importance of the CWP and highlight USGS involvement when presenting decisions or evaluating alternatives that depend on CWP data & studies; and
* Expand collaboration among Cooperators in designing CWP studies, interpretive tools, etc; look for opportunities to share interpretive tools.

**What can the USGS do to improve the CWP?**

* Present a better explanation of CWP value to the public, local decision makers and legislators; look for opportunities to brief legislators and organize group visits to their offices;
* Look for opportunities to share the cost of interpretive studies among Water Science Centers, especially where there is more transferable value (e.g., interstate waters);
* Focus on emerging contaminants, where good science will be required soon;
* Make sure Cooperators are aware of USGS Science Strategy; and
* Streamline the design of interpretive studies to increase efficiency and reduce overhead.

**What can the USGS & Cooperators do to enhance the compatibility of water data collected by different agencies?**

* Expand awareness of National Water Quality Monitoring Council and NADP –and others –efforts to establish and use common standards; and
* USGS & Cooperators should engage other agencies in basinwide coordination, develop & support statewide Monitoring Councils, and compare results from various methods.

Cooperative Water Monitoring and Assessment   
in Florida

Held November 12-13, 2008 in Orlando, FL

**Overview**: In cooperation with the USGS and its Florida Integrated Science Center, the ICWP organized this CWP Roundtable for stakeholders as the seventh in a series of regional stakeholder meetings. The program included presentations about the purpose, history and capabilities of the CWP and some of the challenges facing it. Several Cooperators described the scientific contribution that CWP data and interpretive studies have made in the fulfillment of local water resource responsibilities. The participants divided into two groups of about 25 each, following the presentations, to explore opportunities for both the USGS and the Cooperators to improve the CWP. One group was lead by Elizabeth Thomas (SJRWMD) and the other by Adam Munson (SWFWMD) to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. The highest ranking recommendationswere as follows**:**

**What actions should the USGS consider to improve the CWP?**

* Implement NAVD ‘88
* Shorten turnaround for data delivery and study reporting;
* Increase regular communication with Cooperators (improve accounting transparency), show how they’re getting their money’s worth; request Cooperator comments on draft FISC Science Communication Strategy; schedule regular meetings in WMD offices for information exchange;
* Improve “marketing/outreach” of monitoring and science capabilities for Cooperators’ managers and governing boards; hold regional meetings annually with all stakeholders, including all who use the data and science; help policy makers be more aware when USGS is (or could be) contributing to decision making abilities; make study results easier for the public to find and to understand/apply; sponsor public meetings to present monitoring and interpretive study results;
* Increase availability of USGS training to Cooperators, formalize promotion of training schedules
* Increase CWP finding to match Cooperators’ investments 50:50
* Fund data collection, not studies

**What action should the Cooperators consider to improve the CWP?**

* Invite USGS-FISC leadership for periodic meetings, information exchange and introduction to Cooperator leadership; involve USGS more directly in planning & designing projects, studies;
* Help leaders within Cooperator organizations to recognize and appreciate the value of USGS contributions to their projects, studies, operational decisions, etc; acknowledge USGS as source of data and science when presenting issues/decisions to the public, policy makers, etc;
* Provide more active support for funding; engage statewide organizations, develop grassroots effort
* Encourage blog writers to highlight recent USGS studies and projects

**How can we coordinate monitoring efforts to increase the value of all the data for use in interpretive studies and program decisions?**

* Support existing efforts, e.g., FL Water Resource Monitoring Council, where stakeholders could agree on minimum standards, metadata –before integration; meet periodically to review/refine and promote plans, progress & needs (e.g., the Oceans Council “GAMES,” ACF bi-weekly teleconf);
* Invite Cooperators to USGS coordination meetings to share and review data collection plans
* Establish data portal where all data can be accessed (e.g. “FREAC”); establish a data warehouse (e.g., Storet, Sofia, DBHydro);need to get funding to support reasonable level of quality and consistency; identify and promote a single agency (state or federal?) to gather and distribute data and study results; super site – multi-parameter, prioritization
* Require data “contribution” from local projects in exchange for funding;
* Establish an electronic bulletin board for new monitoring projects, studies, *etc*.;

Mid-Atlantic Region Cooperators’ Roundtable

for the

USGS Cooperative Water Program

**Held February 5-6, 2009 in Philadelphia, PA**

In conjunction with the Delaware River Basin Commission, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, Interstate Environmental Commission & Susquehanna River Basin Commission

In cooperation with the DRBC, ICPRB, IEC & SRBC, the ICWP & USGS organized this Roundtable for stakeholders in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. The participants divided into three break-out groups of about 25 each, following the presentations and discussion of CWP & NSIP highlights and experience, to explore opportunities for both the USGS and the Cooperators to improve the CWP. The groups worked independently to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. The highest ranking recommendationswere as follows**:**

**What actions should the USGS consider to improve the CWP?**

* Provide reviews of interpretive studies faster, produce more informal products prior to formal report delivery; make data more easily accessible
* Promote broader recognition and use of transferable tools (e.g., StreamStats); more rapid transfer of new technologies; continue development of new technologies in the interest of cost savings
* Fully fund NSIP and return the CWP to 50:50 match
* Expand Cooperator base, identify and encourage smaller Cooperators and other users of information
* Increase effort to include Cooperators input into NSIP design and prioritization for the funding of gages
* Assign a person as liaison, single point of contact, for key regions and for science themes; develop regional inventories of skills, equipment, ability to support other Water Science Centers, e.g., Regional Workforce Study
* Stop putting headquarters’ overhead onto CWP cost (e.g., reduce “business style” accounting for projects); identify data management as an element of O&M
* Give Cooperators credit for in-kind services in CWP requirements

**What action should the Cooperators consider to improve the CWP?**

* Improve decision maker (Congress, state legislatures and local) awareness of USGS monitoring and interpretive science, their importance to water management and society; coordinate the message and delivery timing by as many groups as possible; make the USGS role and contributions to Cooperator decisions more visible to the public, legislators and congressional representatives; highlight the large number of (multiple) uses of the same data and studies that support different Cooperators and communities; make opportunity with incoming Administration officials to improve interagency communication and coordination
* Highlight the importance of monitoring and interpretive studies funding in our state and local agency budgets; develop streamgage-specific line items; enhance message delivery to state legislatures; specify conditions in permits and dockets, set up trust fund to accumulate fines and judgments to support long-term operation of streamgages (e.g., Marston shale);
* Use regional Cooperator meetings to share assessment of needs, opportunities, etc; Collaborate in defining tools and products needed from USGS, and in sharing cost; actively prioritize Cooperators needs, like WV Monitoring Council; communicate more regularly among Cooperators, involve new Cooperator groups (e.g. private sector) in Cooperator base; states should identify a “point person”

**How can we coordinate monitoring efforts within the region to increase the value of all the collected data for use in interpretive studies and program decisions?**

* agencies should conduct a gaps analysis and communicate what is available, from who & where; coordinate the design of monitoring network among agencies at a regional scale and develop (agree on) standards for metadata and data collection to support data clearinghouse, data portal; apply consistent methods and protocols to yield comparable results; develop techniques for evaluating data and comparability to normalize data collected by different sources;
* Invest in new technologies (e.g., remote sensing, acoustic Doppler, etc);
* Identify key management systems, key objectives and related monitoring needs and data gaps; and
* Collect water use data the same way we do water availability and water quality data, for national and regional comparability.

Pacific Northwest Cooperators’ Roundtable

for the

USGS Cooperative Water Program

**Held September 2-3, 2009 in Tacoma, WA**

In conjunction with the Idaho Water Users Association, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Oregon Water Resources Congress, River Network & Washington State Water Resources Association

Following a series of panel presentations, the participants divided into three groups of 20-25 each to explore opportunities for both the USGS and the Cooperators to improve the CWP. The three groups worked independently for about 90 minutes to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. Those questions and the combined results are available on the internet, but the highest ranking recommendations were as follows:

**What actions should the USGS consider doing to improve the CWP?**

* USGS should convene regular advisory committees (and less formal meetings) to share science, enhance understanding and relations with Cooperators on a on topical/regional basis, to seek opportunities that are mutually beneficial and get partners more engaged in the planning and management decisions; this would also help USGS maintain awareness of emerging needs;
* Place greater priority in budget requests to restore 50:50 cost-share capability in CWP and full funding for the NSIP;
* Collect more data available from other agencies and make available through the NWIS or a portal;
* Make better use of informal data collection methods (e.g., volunteers, web cams, etc.); and
* Provide more timely access to interim and final results from both data collection and interpretive studies.

**What action should the Cooperators consider doing to improve the CWP?**

* Remind your congressional and state legislative delegations of the CWP and NSIP benefits and needs so that appropriate support (from federal, state and other sources) can be secured; and
* Help with the formation of state monitoring councils and make sure USGS clearly understands Cooperator needs; invite USGS into Cooperator meetings to help WSC leadership identify and understand issues early.

**How can we coordinate monitoring efforts within the region to increase the value of all the data for use in interpretive studies and program decisions?**

* The USGS, Cooperators and other stakeholders should collaborate in the organization and support for statewide or watershed monitoring councils that could inventory water monitoring programs and promote a set of useful standards, protocols, meta-data, etc. to reduce discrepancies among the data sets developed by different agencies, etc.;
* A portal should be established, funded and maintained to provide efficient access to water data from a wide variety of sources; and
* If the monitoring councils become focused on specific tasks (or operate at a very technical level), the USGS and Cooperators should organize less formal meetings on a regular basis to bring various agencies and organizations that collect and/or need water data to facilitate the coordination of their needs, plans and investments.

2010 Cooperative Water Program  
Stakeholders’ Strategy Conference

**Held March 25, 2010 in Washington, DC**

In cooperation with the USGS, the ICWP and Western States Water Council organized this conference to review the results of nine regional “Cooperators’ Roundtable” meetings. The following actions were recommended to enhance the CWP capability to sustain better water planning, operation & management decisions:

* The need for a stronger CWP is widely accepted among federal and non-federal experts, but has not been clearly presented to policy makers or to the public. The connection between insufficient data and the impairment of water supplies, flood protection, environmental protection/restoration, infrastructure capacity, recreation safety and navigation needs to be made more effectively.
  + Not just a responsibility of the USGS, we all need to take the initiative.
  + Develop specific examples to illustrate the local, regional and national consequences.
  + Articulate the importance in relation to climate change and the fiscal consequences to both USGS and the Cooperators; also in terms of national economic competitiveness.
  + Keep the message simple and direct (1 page with appropriate contact information).
  + Take advantage of 2009 SECURE Water Act provisions (PL 111-11, Sections 9501-9509).
  + Include assessment of budget constraints facing state, tribal and local agencies in relation to the recent shift of the financial burden in their direction.
  + Articulate the rationale for the 50/50 cost-share tradition.
  + Brief the USGS Director ASAP.
* The potential value of combining datasets collected by USGS and by many other agencies is believed to be substantial and growing, especially if more Cooperators and other federal agencies continue redirecting more of their budgets toward their own, independent data programs. Water community leaders need to understand the potential consequences of this fragmentation and develop more effective means (organizations, protocols, etc.) to characterize and enhance) the compatibility of data collected and maintained by different agencies.
  + Inventory existing monitoring sites and assess the need for data that isn’t being collected.
  + Develop the means for “optimizing” the collective investment in data for increase/maximum the regional and national benefit.
* Much of the water data collected (at public expense) by other agencies (federal and non-federal) is difficult to find, understand and utilize in models and other decision support tools. Existing examples of data sharing, links and portals (e.g., in Texas and for the Bear River) need to be identified and studied.
  + Attribution of credit to the collecting agency(s) is always important.
  + The federal Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI, which is convened by the Interior Department and plans to meet next on July 13-14, 2010) may provide an appropriate forum for pursuing this set of opportunities.
  + Initiating pilot projects may be the best way to demonstrate the capabilities and value and to work through the difficulties.
  + Establishing the criteria for data collection and exchange (i.e., a “good streamgaging seal of approval”) would be helpful.
* There are many examples of collaboration between Cooperators and the Water Science Centers resulting in substantial cost savings and efficiency improvements in collection and management of water data and in development of interpretive science. Several states have water monitoring/streamgage coordination councils and the Cooperators (and USGS) in more states should consider their potential benefits.

New England Cooperators’ Roundtable

for the

USGS Cooperative Water Program

**Held November 9-10, 2010 in Chelmsford, MA**

In conjunction with the NEIWPCC

In cooperation with the NEIWPCC and the USGS, the ICWP organized this CWP Roundtable for stakeholders in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Following the briefings and discussion, the participants divided into two groups of about 25 each to explore opportunities for both the USGS and the Cooperators to improve the CWP. The two groups worked independently to respond to three questions and prioritize the results. The highest ranking recommendations were as follows:

**What can the USGS do to improve the CWP?**

* Increase funding to NSIP & WSCs
* Regional approach to climate change and other studies, spokesman for all regional offices
* Maintain excellence –science & service, enhance interpretive presentation
* Market USGS more effectively –strategic look at communication products & strategies for CWP & NSIP, design for use by a wide variety of audiences
* Coordination with other USGS programs (e.g., NAWQA), EPA & other federal agencies –funds to support different issues
* Acknowledge Cooperators & enhance information sharing –list serves, regional contact databases, webinars

**What can the Cooperators do to improve the CWP?**

* Need to communicate end results & collaboration with USGS more effectively, so that congressional, OMB and state legislative contacts understand value to the region
* Annual “summit” with federal agencies to plan & prioritize future investigations, agree on cost/benefit & monitoring priorities, enhance regional coordination and identify training needs –tied to budget cycle
* Find outside funding –TNC, TU, other friends
* More coordination during investigations, co-author reports with USGS

**Should USGS explore the feasibility and potential benefits of taking a more regional/multi-state approach to monitoring networks and hydrologic investigations through the CWP?**

* Regional approach could bring enhanced issue identification, project design & additional funding/expertise together from WSCs, OFAs and Cooperators into investigation of shared concerns
* Don’t lose focus on local/specific issues in order to serve national or regional concerns –make sure sufficient capacity aligns with Cooperators’ needs
* Need to get Water Census & other national programs involved with field offices

Colo. River Water Science Stakeholders’ Roundtable

for the

USGS Cooperative Water Program

Held February 8-9, 2012 in Salt Lake City, UT

In conjunction with the Western States Water Council   
& Upper Colorado River Compact Commission

**Overview**: This program included presentations by USGS program leaders and scientists about the purpose, history and capabilities of the CWP, the NSIP & the WaterSMART Water Census & Regional Studies and some of the challenges facing them. Approximately 80 separated into 3 break-out groups to suggest priorities and improvements for USGS consideration. The three break-out groups worked independently to respond to the questions included in the meeting program and prioritize their recommendations; the highest ranking recommendations were:

**Colorado River Basin Water Census Pilot**

* **Develop a more structured process for planning** – and engaging input—from stakeholders in the Basin – for coordination with state and local efforts and integrating information into the Water Census Pilot process. Establish clear design, schedule and expectations for Water Census stakeholders early in the design & implementation process. Evaluate adequacy of the available data, identify significant gaps and don’t duplicate ongoing efforts in which monitoring, establishment of environmental benchmarks and the assessment of water availability have been ongoing at state and interstate levels.
* **Develop a more structured process for communicating** USGS plans & activities to stakeholders– develop outreach strategies so that reports/findings/information are not surprising, duplicative, or disruptive in ongoing state or interstate deliberations.
* **Don’t dilute ongoing efforts and collaboration with a new federal initiative**. Not recommending against USGS assisting with interpretation at local levels, but acknowledge that the federal initiative is not a 1:1 substitute for local, state, and tribal cost-share programs in which the monitoring and interpretative programs are developed collaboratively for critical decision making. Continue to communicate that USGS is planning to provide the water-budget components needed by state and local agencies to assess water availability in their own terms for their specific situation (i.e., that USGS is not proposing to do the water availability assessments itself).
* **Evaluate USGS policies relating to integrating other’s data** – such as, for example, flagging it differently so that it can still be managed and accessible to stakeholders. This is critical in order to maximize the value from the Water Census Pilot in the Colorado River Basin.

**CWP/NSIP**

* **Fully implement NSIP** and recapture monies needed to support interpretative assessments and research through the CWP.
* **Restore the 50-50 match in CWP.**
* **Maintain both data collection and interpretative studies in CWP,** but prioritize (don’t let go of) the valuable monitoring in priority areas because of possible implications to so many decisions and climate change.
* **Continue to evaluate and reduce costs of gages.**
* **Enhance communication and marketing of capabilities**, (for example, showcase tools like StreamStats to different audiences through webinars, fact sheets & other communication means)
* **Prioritize development & dissemination of innovative tools** for use by stakeholders, including StreamStats; new innovations are particularly needed in the GIS and remote sensing areas.
* **Continue to support regional and national forums** to communicate with and foster technical exchange among stakeholders at regional and national levels.