



# **2023 Washington D.C. Roundtable Meeting Summary**

**April 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> | Doubletree Hotel –Crystal City  
300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA**

## **Tuesday, April 4th – Joint Water Planner’s Conference**

ICWP Chair Matt Unruh and NWSA President Dan Buhman kicked off the 2023 Washington DC Roundtable with welcoming remarks.

### **Federal Water Resource Program Roundtable Discussions**

#### **DOI/USGS**

Annalise Blum, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science for the Department of Interior, provided an overview of the Department’s priorities for 2023. They include utilizing Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding opportunities toward climate resilience, better delivering science to underserved communities, and reliable, safe water supplies with an eye toward drought resilience.

Don Cline, USGS Associate Director for Water Resources, thanked ICWP and our partners for our annual streamgage funding letter. He highlighted that we are entering challenging times for water management. The USGS is focusing on making sure the agency’s integrated water resource plan will be a far-reaching stakeholder-driven assessment. USGS is looking modernizing its models to ensure they’re capable of representing extreme events, and knowing that, data must be prioritized to fuel the models.

Cory Angeroth, USGS Deputy Program Coordinator for the Groundwater and Streamflow Information Program, gave an overview of the Water Observing Systems Portfolio. Unfortunately due to only a slight increase in funding during Fiscal Year 2023, USGS will lose 17 gages. The FY2024 request in the President’s budget would add 30 gages back and keep the others operational.

Mindi Dalton, USGS Program Coordinator for the Water Availability and Use Science Program (WAUSP) and the National Water Quality Program (NWQP), gave an overview of USGS Research, modeling and assessment activities. The USGS 5 year assessment report will be out in 2024 as part of the routine 5 year cycle. USGS is prioritizing integrating water quality and human behavior into its models and assessments.

Steve Aichele, USGS Hydrography Management and Planning Lead, provided updates on the 3D Elevation Program (3DEP). The 3D Hydrography program's goal is to align hydrography data with elevation data. FY2023 data acquisition activities will include NRCS, USFS, and state project contributions.

Greg Snyder, USGS Requirements Capabilities & Analysis for Earth Observations Project Sponsor, spoke to the past, current and future Landsat activities. Landsat Next will involve commercial, institutional, and international partnerships.

**Supplemental materials:** See USGS presentations [via this link](#) to the presentations folder.

### **Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works/USACE**

Robyn Colosimo, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Project Planning and Review for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works provided highlights from Assistant Secretary Michael Connor's remarks. Extreme weather events are the new norms, which means traditional infrastructure solutions are not sufficient. The Corps must now pre-position and anticipate events and expand efforts to communicate risk and innovated with broader communities in mind. The next challenge is to meet demands in a prioritized way and use funding to the best of the agency's ability, while thinking differently about the agency's authorities. The goal is to transition to address the new norms of weather extremes and increase resilience through informed action. Secretary Connor's priorities are to: 1) upgrade the nation's waterways and ports to strengthen supply chains and economic growth, 2) build innovative, climate-resilient infrastructure to protect communities and ecosystems, 3) modernize Civil Works programs to better serve the needs of disadvantaged communities, 4) Invest in science, research and development to deliver enduring water-resource solutions, and 5) strengthen communications and relationships to solve water resource challenges. Recent rulemakings include Waters of the United States (WOTUS), comprehensive public benefits, and standing up of the Corps' first ever loan program spelling \$70M in IJA funding and a total of \$6B of potential loans to be provided.

Sharon Sartor, USACE Headquarters Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Program Manager, gave an overview of the PAS program. She noted that PAS is a covered program for the White House's Environmental Justice 40 initiative.

Amy Frantz, Senior Policy Advisor to USACE Headquarters, provided updates on Corps activities including the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022 implementation guidance which will be published soon. The Environmental Justice definition was finalized in March, and more.

**Supplemental materials:** See USACE presentations [via this link](#) to the presentations folder.

## NOAA

Dr. Thomas Graziano, Director of the Office of Water Prediction for the National Weather Service (NWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), spoke to recent accomplishments. The NWS just issued a 10 year strategic plan that emphasizes impact-based decision support services. The new Water Resources Cooperative Institute is working with the National Water Center at the University of Alabama. NOAA's IJA money is to leverage updates for data frequency and probable maximum precipitation nationally. Two new bills were highlighted include the National Water Center authorizing legislation (Public Law 116-271) and the FLOODS Act of 2022 which codifies hydrologic services program within NOAA and established the Water Policy Committee. Atlas 15 will be completed in 2027 and the Realtime Forecast Flood Inundation Maps will be completed by 2026.

Veva De Heza, NOAA's National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) Executive Director, gave updates on NIDIS reauthorization activities. NOAA will look to modernize NIDIS to accelerate opportunities under the program because climate events like drought are accelerating. Up until now, NIDIS has rolled out regionally and the goal will be to complete it nationally. Reauthorization efforts will focus on 1) building out a national Drought Early Warning System (DEWS), 2) modernize drought preparedness to include big data, analytics and artificial intelligence, 3) implement the 2022 strategic plan and 4) use NIDIS to get other agency tools out there.

**Supplemental materials:** See NOAA presentation [via this link](#) to the presentations folder.

## NOAA

Sarah Brennan, Deputy Director for NASA's Water Resources Application Area, gave updates on NASA's applied sciences division. There are 26 observing satellites in operation; NASA just launched the surface water ocean topography mission (SWOT). NASA focuses on a systems approach.

**Supplemental materials:** See NASA presentation [via this link](#) to the presentations folder.

## Wednesday, April 5th – Water Policy Summit

ICWP Executive Director Beth Callaway welcomed panel participants for our first Water Policy Summit. The theme of the summit is a deeper look at the role that various aspects of water resource management plays in advancing our nation's climate resilience. Increasing disaster costs and impacts – such as those due to drought, floods, and extreme weather

events -- pose a growing threat to American lives, livelihoods, infrastructure, supply chains, and military readiness. Becoming a nation that is adaptive to climate change requires elevating resilience as a national priority.

### **Panel 1 -- Water Data & Science**

**MODERATOR: Amy Shallcross, Delaware River Basin Commission**

**PANELISTS: Jordan Read (CUAHSI), Michelle Bushman (WSWC), Jason Olive (AFWA)**

#### **Discussion:**

- Each organization shared info on cross-institutional knowledge management systems
- The biggest gaps in water data are around data accessibility, capacity, and the need to better communicate uncertainty.
- The greatest need to focus on improvements for data reconciliation are regarding data limitations, the need for standardization, while looking for overlaps.
- All speakers emphasized the importance of effective science communication.

### **Panel 2 -- Infrastructure**

**MODERATOR: Dan Buhman, NWSA President**

**PANELISTS: Julie Ufner (NWC), Tracy Meehan (AWWA)**

#### **Discussion:**

- Federal water infrastructure priorities should be applied toward incentivizing consolidation and regionalization, capacity building and governance.
- Priority funding needs should focus on operations and maintenance infrastructure, with considerations of the impacts of the national debt. The regulatory process distracts from the whole system management.
- Consistent guidance is needed to overcome funding and resource gaps for water infrastructure.
- The benefits of natural infrastructure were discussed.
- A lot of progress is happening toward improving our nation's water infrastructure.

### **Panel 3 -- Planning**

**MODERATOR: Andrew Dehoff, Susquehanna River Basin Commission**

**PANELISTS: Erica Brown (AMWA), Susan Gilson (NAFSMA)**

#### **Discussion:**

- To fill in the gaps for water resources planning needs across the nation, we need more multipurpose projects and to work across federal agencies. Numerous federal programs that will help bridge the gaps were discussed.

- To better engage the federal government in state planning, we need to break down silos and encourage states to prioritize funding their infrastructure projects.
- Challenges with federal programs include discerning how to support disadvantaged communities and fully evaluating the cost/benefit ratio.

**Takeaways:**

ICWP Chair Matt Unruh and NWSA President Dan Buhman noted key takeaways, including:

- The need for coordination and collaboration – there is power in unified messaging between water resources organizations.
- Strategic communications are key – how do we do this to better resonate with the federal government decision makers and local stakeholders?
- There are gaps in coordination – a needs inventory should be conducted; where can we better build out information and capacity?

**Congressional Panel****House Transportation & Infrastructure – Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment**

Logan Ferree (Committee staff – Minority) and Ryan Hambleton (Committee staff – Majority) provided their insights on committee makeup, priorities and upcoming issues. Most of the time will be spent working on WRDA 2024. Since House T&I is 50% freshman members, some significant education will take place on the Corps and WRDA. The WRDA 2024 schedule for the House will mirror the Senate's; member submission portals will open up before January 2024. The goal for WRDA 2024 is to maintain project focus with some policy that can be added in. Committee members will drive the makeup of the bill; issues on water supply and levees will likely be incorporated. They emphasized that it would be helpful for stakeholders to communicate to Congress about the importance of staying on a 2-year WRDA cycle. The committee wants to hear how the Corps implementation of WRDA 2022 goes from a stakeholder perspective; it is a good idea for stakeholders to work with individual Congressional and Corps district offices.

**ICWP Internship Project Presentations**

ICWP's three interns presented progress updates on their projects. Their final reports will be completed and shared with ICWP members at the end of Spring Semester 2023.

**Kaitlyn Engel – Columbia University**

Project: USGS Streamgage gap analysis

**Jake Richards – University of Minnesota**

Project: Federal Climate Action Plan tools, graphics and communications resources

**Katrina Starbird – Yale University**

Project: IJJA/IRA resources for ICWP members

