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2007 WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE & LEADERSHIP RECEPTION HIGHLIGHTS

To continue serving our membership and pursuing our efforts to collaborate more deliberately with other leading water organizations, we included leaders from the WSWC, AWRA and ASFPM in our regular Washington, DC meetings this year. The following highlights are provided to reflect the information, ideas and decisions for the benefit of members that were unable to attend and to assist members in supporting several follow-up initiatives that are identified below.

Our program and handout materials from the meeting will be available to download from our website, www.icwp.org, and are not attached here.

Monday, February 26, provided a stimulating opportunity to get reacquainted with and engage in discussions with key officials from the:

- NOAA Climate Program Office;
- Army Corps' Civil Works Division;
- EPA Office of Water;
- Interior Department Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water & Science and USGS;
- House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment & Related Agencies.



Beginning Monday afternoon and continuing Tuesday morning, we reviewed ICWP priorities set during the past year and reviewed the planning efforts that the Western States Water Council made last year and that the Association of State Flood Plain Managers made (in conjunction with the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies) in December 2006.

More specific highlights follow!

NOAA Climate Program Office. Many of us were unfamiliar with the Climate Office programs, so the overview of its budget, staff and responsibilities were very useful.. Admiral Lautenbacher's commitment to multidisciplinary integration among the research, collaboration and grants programs presents significant challenges, but it sounds like the Climate Programs Office is making progress. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report last month is a significant step forward and the next report (on vulnerabilities, due in April) is expected to be

even more consequential. The US climate models have gained substantial credibility in the international community, simulating 20th Century climate patterns with about 90% correlation. They are getting much better fidelity, even at smaller scales, but temperature is much easier than precipitation and significant topographic features (e.g., mountain ranges) reduce the correlation markedly.

Roger Pulwarte is directing the NIDIS effort and expects to have a first iteration of the implementation plan soon and a prototype of the drought portal by the end of 2007. Marty Hoerling is making good progress on the river forecasting and we decided to include progress reports on their work at our Annual Meeting next October.

Army Corps' Civil Works Division. Prospects for the WRDA in the 110th Congress were the primary focus of our discussion, although we can look for new FY-07 Workplans soon, too; the Continuing Resolutions provide about \$300M more than the Administration requested. We confirmed previous indications that Congressional leaders are reluctant to press forward with WRDA without some indication from OMB or CEQ that it won't be vetoed if it stays within certain parameters.

It seems as if the Administration may prefer that the Corps focus its resources on previously authorized WRDA projects, rather than seek authorization for new projects; the "backlog" of previously authorized projects is estimated to require about \$50B to complete, although the source of this estimate is not clear and the Congress has provided about \$2B annually to the Corps for these projects. The recommendations for improving this situation that the House Appropriations Committee requested from the National Academy of Public Administration is supposed to be presented this month, but it was difficult to detect any significant optimism about the usefulness of those recommendations.

The Secretary and CEQ have been active with Congressional leaders in an attempt to establish acceptable parameters for both the type of projects and their cost that might be included in a new WRDA this year. "Environmental infrastructure" (meaning water and wastewater treatment facilities) may be one of the more significant points of contention, since it was a substantial element in the 2005 House version and not in the 2006 Senate version.

On a more encouraging note, the Corps wants to increase its collaborative efforts to assist states, in addition to the role it has with local sponsors of projects, with more comprehensive planning for water resource management. Taking many lessons from the New Orleans failures, the Corps may seek broader authority to participate in and support collaborative planning efforts lead and directed by state and local agencies even where there is no indication that a Corps project would necessarily be identified. The need to prepare more deliberately for project life cycle issues, anticipating re-operation, renovation and removal as future conditions require, is also gaining consideration. The Corps has begun distributing a "white paper" entitled (Strategy for Collaborative Integrated Water Resources Management," but the February 2007 version is thin on substance. It suggests the Corps has drafted legislative proposals organized in the following four categories:

- Collaborative Integrated Water Resources Management;
- Public Safety and Life Cycle Infrastructure Management;
- Improving Financing Mechanisms; and
- Business Process Improvements.

Stay tuned for more here!

EPA Office of Water. One of the EPA Administrator's top priorities is improving America's water infrastructure, so the Office of Water continues to invest a great deal of effort in four related focal points:

- Asset Management, where EPA expects that advanced technologies can be more useful in reducing O&M cost;
- Full Cost Pricing, in which EPA continues to make the case for a cost-based rate structure for both drinking water and wastewater treatment that incorporates all of the costs of building, maintaining and operating a system into the price, reasoning that subsidized rates place a greater burden on taxpayers and send insufficient "market signals" to consumers.
- Water Efficiency, where the agency is rolling out "Water Sense," a new initiative modeled after their Energy Star program for certifying efficient products; and
- Watershed Approach, where EPA is continuing its efforts to advance regional collaboration and to target strategic, cost-effective actions to meet water quality standards through the SRFs and in the extension of WQ trading programs, wetland mitigation banks, *etc.*

EPA is also exploring the potential for interstate lending and the removal of state volume caps for private activity bonds to make additional funding available and facilitate public/private partnerships for water infrastructure improvements. Flyers for the Sustainable Infrastructure conference next month in Georgia were distributed.

Mr Grumbles also mentioned that he is spending a surprising amount of time attending to interstate disputes, including these related to the Chesapeake Bay, the Savannah Harbor TMDL involving South Carolina and Georgia and the Illinois River between Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Interior Department. We had the opportunity to meet Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Tim Petty, who brings an interesting perspective to the Interior/USGS interface based on his academic background in geology and groundwater hydrology and his experience in Russia during the 1990s and in the Senate GOP Leadership Conference, where he focused on corporate internet communication. His enthusiasm for the USGS, his role in communication and promoting grassroots, "bottom-up initiation of policy" was quite evident. He and Bob Hirsch encouraged the ICWP to continue the organization and information of Cooperators in the USGS Cooperative Water Program and the pursuit of their recommendations and provided very helpful insight into USGS efforts.

The USGS has developed rapid deployment packages of storm surge monitoring equipment, based upon recent hurricane experience and signed a contract with an organization of university science programs to support development of an internet portal between several agency databases, including the USGS and NOAA water databases. They are also working with EPA to reduce the separation and inconsistencies between their water quality databases. On the budget front, the Department is making progress translating the FY-07 continuing resolutions into working budget plans. They are enthusiastic about the \$5M measure supporting the Healthy Lands Initiative and the increasing funds for NSIP, recognizing the benefits that streamgaging provides for many other agencies in the Department and a commitment to continue to "shore-up the core competencies" at USGS. Further discussion with the BIA was suggested in the interest of assuring that CWP and NSIP provide sufficient support for the implementation and monitoring of negotiated Native American water settlements. The Corps of Engineers also benefits substantially from the USGS water science programs and is expecting to provide \$18M in FY-07 in support of the CWP

House Appropriations. House Interior Subcommittee staff expert Chris Topik provided an interesting and encouraging report on the progress and prospects for the proposal of funding bills for FY-08 in the 110th Congress. The transfer of leadership responsibilities has resulted in many new assignments for Members and staff, delaying the schedule of hearings somewhat, but opening many opportunities. Those opportunities, however, are constrained by the fact that approximately 2/3 of the federal budget is committed to “non-discretionary” spending (about 15% goes to pay interest on our national debt, for example).

There appears to be a substantial new commitment in this Congress to work out an agreement between the House and Senate Budget Committees concerning the overall size and priorities (the so-called “302(a) Allocation”) by mid-March, for example; apparently, they haven’t been able to reach such agreement in recent years. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Obey will divide that allocation into “302(b) Allocations” for each of the 12 Subcommittees. Committee staff sense a commitment among the Members to reduce “earmarks” by about 50% this year, although there are several important variables in the way that term is used.

Chris offered several useful sources of budget information, such as the Congressional Research Service reports (<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app07.html>, as an example) and a handout listing the Interior Subcommittee’s membership and summarizing its scope of responsibilities.

Since 2001, adjusting for inflation, the budget for the Interior Department appears to have lost about 16%, the Agriculture Department has lost 13.4% and EPA has lost 29.2%, based on data from the President’s recent budget requests.

AWRA 3rd National Water Policy Dialogue. The January 2007 Dialogue identified a wide-ranging set of recommendations and a clear indication of priorities based on a consensus of the participants. Most prominent among them is support for an organized effort to strengthen communication at the national and regional levels concerning water policy and program alignment. Gerry Galloway presented a compelling summary of the importance (and the frustrations) of raising water issues in the national political awareness. The ASCE Infrastructure Report Card assessed the condition of America’s dams, drinking water treatment, wastewater treatment, bridges and navigable waterways in 2005 as “poor” or slightly worse. The 1993 flooding on the Mississippi River caused massive damage and disruption but little policy change.

The recommendations included in AWRA’s letter to the White House indicate a need for:

- the Administration and Congress to work with Governors and Tribal leaders to establish broad principles for water management – in essence, a national vision;
- the Administration and Congress to better coordinate water resources activities, to provide substantive coordination or adjudication of disagreements among agencies and to ensure needed collaboration;
- the Congress should work to better coordinate actions of the numerous Congressional committees that deal with water;
- the Administration, Congress, and the Governors should promote watershed-oriented planning rather than thinking within traditional political boundaries and project-level authorizations; and
- the Administration, Congress, and the Governors must ensure that our scientific knowledge about water is readily available, clearly presented, and fully considered in making decisions on key water issues.

ASFPM/NAFSMA Flood Risk Summit. Larry Larson described the genesis of the Flood Risk Summit last December with the Corps and FEMA and indicated the ASFPM Board of Directors is moving forward quickly with a set of 25 recommendations addressing levee design,

construction and maintenance. Seeing that there was “0% policy change” following the hundreds of miles of levee damage caused by the 1993 floods in the Mississippi river watersheds and the intensive documentation of policy flaws that ensued, the ASFPM is determined to make better use of the post-Katrina window of opportunity.

Chad Berginnis outlined the list of ASFPM priorities their committees and members will work on in the coming year:

- Levee Policy, including a levee inventory and a program for proper O&M
- Consistency between the Corps and FEMA on procedures and standards
- NFIP reform, including the map modification program and reduction of subsidies
- Risk communication
- Data support, including the CWP and NSIP effort
- FEMA reform
- Promotion of their No Adverse Impact policy, including a handbook for coastal communities
- Climate change, flood risk assessment and disaster planning

WGA/WSWC Sustainable Futures Report. Duane Smith, who is also the Chair of the Western States Water Council this year, provided an overview of the intensive membership effort that resulted in the WSWC recommendations to the Western Governors Association last June. Tony Willardson, the WSWC Deputy Executive Director, added an overview of the recommendations and the ongoing coordination between WSWC and ICWP since our joint meeting in San Antonio in November 2005. Duane proposed making contact with every Governor through our member representatives designed to raise water priorities on their respective agendas to a level that will show up at the WGA, NGA and other Governors’ meetings.

Tony outlined the list of priorities that WSWC is pursuing this year:

- Presenting a progress report to the WGA in June on implementation of recommendations in their June 2006 report, including water supply assessments, streamgaging and snow surveys and the LANDSAT
- Climate Change workshop in May, 2007 and a Watershed Planning/Climate Change theme for their fall meeting
- Urging stronger commitment within the Interior Department to the resolution of Tribal water rights issues
- Building support for adding the thermal band mapping instrument to NASA’s plan for LANDSAT8

Recommendations for Action in 2007. 2007 appears to offer an unusual opening for those with important problems and a clear idea for solving them. Many senior Administration officials would like to make additional program and policy changes this year before the election campaigns for 2008 engulf our national policy capability. The shift of political control in the Congress has already resulted in greater inquiry into a wide variety of policies and program accountability, raising tensions with the Administration while, at the same time, creating opportunity for problem solvers.

From the ICWP perspective, there is more to be done in raising awareness of the USGS water data and science programs and implementing the recommendations from our “Interstate Water Solutions” report. Our new position statement on drought and emergency water supply preparedness also reflects ongoing interest in climate change and the implications for helping communities prepare for future floods and droughts.

- Streamgauge Support Letters have been sent to the Interior Department and OMB for the past two years to underscore the importance that both the water data and the interpretive studies have for many public and private sector applications, ranging from levee, bridge and reservoir design to boating safety, water quality protection, flood forecasting and environmental restoration.
- Implementing the “Interstate Water Solutions” recommendations in ICWP’s February 2006 assessment –will involve contacting the director or deputy director for as many interstate water organizations as possible to let them know about our February 2006 report and collect key information for a guide we will link to a map-style presentation on our website; we will also be collecting and digesting the key portions of EPA, Interior, Corps and NOAA strategic plans in preparation to discuss emerging issues and program opportunities for stronger involvement of interstate water organizations during the DC Roundtable meeting.
- Authorization of the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) and the proposal to add a thermal mapping instrument to LANDSAT 8 represent tremendous opportunities to bring better information into the decision making process but presents enormous coordination and budget challenges.

In the course of our discussions, we considered many ideas that merit further consideration:

- Thermal Mapping Instrumentation on LANDSAT 8 –mobilize another effort to demonstrate the value and broad support for this addition, which could add more than \$50M to the project cost and is not currently in NASA’s plan;
- Corps’ Capability to Support State and Interstate Planning –endorse the concept of greater Corps support for comprehensive, watershed planning lead by the state agencies and their interstate organizations; find out if \$4.5M in the FY-06 budget is available again in FY-07 under the Continuing Resolutions.
- Incentives for Proper O&M and Integration of Land Use with Water Resource Management –alignment of infrastructure maintenance with related program purposes (e.g., levee maintenance with flood insurance program benefits; conformity with current watershed plans with permitting and funding priorities).
- Support among Governors for Water Issues –extending the awareness that WGA has among the rest of the states with the prospect of initiating a regular, national meeting of state, interstate and federal leaders to establish priorities, bridge gaps and resolve policy inconsistencies; also to create a national framework that would sustain similar investment of talent and energy at regional levels

The actions we agreed to pursue in league with the ASFPM, AWRA and WSWC include:

- Finding out how we can help AWRA in its effort to raise water issues to a higher level of priority;
- Getting a better understanding of the Corps’ legislative proposals for expanding their authorization to support state and interstate planning efforts with the prospect that this is worth our support;
- Promote an alignment of the schedule for water organization meetings in Washington, DC next year with the prospect of amplifying the visibility and opportunity that water leaders have with Congressional and Administration officials.