



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, VA 20192



In Reply Refer to:
Mail Stop 409

September 13, 2006

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Association of State Flood Plain Managers

Sue Lowry
Interstate Council on Water Policy

Susan Gilson
National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies

David Conrad
National Wildlife Federation

Dale Swensen
National Water Resources Association

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Thank you for participating in the Second National Stakeholders Roundtable for the U.S. Geological Survey Cooperative Water Program (CWP) in Austin, Texas during January 30-February 1, 2006. We would like to take this opportunity to respond to the excellent suggestions that arose from the Roundtable.

We would like to start by thanking the Association of State Flood Plain Managers, the Interstate Council on Water Policy, the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies, the National Wildlife Federation, the National Water Resources Association, the Western States Water Council, the Texas Water Development Board, the Texas Water Conservation Association, and other organizations for being generous with time and effort in order to make the Second Roundtable a success. We would also like to thank the individual participants for their time and effort. It is very helpful to us to receive advice and recommendations about the Cooperative Water Program from a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

We, at the USGS, also appreciate the positive, collaborative tone that permeated the discussions at the Roundtable, as exemplified during the opening comments by Weir LaBatt of the Texas Water Development Board:

Good, reliable and consistent water data are the key pieces that tie together our water supply decisions, our flood control plans, our drought management efforts, our water quality protection, our environmental needs and many other important responsibilities. The USGS is a key partner in our water planning and management ...

We view partnerships as crucial to meeting the Nation's needs for water science and data, and in that spirit will work to keep our partnerships with State, local, and tribal water organizations strong, productive, and mutually beneficial.

The discussions during the Roundtable included a wide spectrum of voices from the stakeholder community, and touched on a broad range of issues related to the Program. This response will focus on those recommendations that were included in the summary you provided to us in your letter (from Sue Lowry) of June 20, 2006. Some of the recommendations included in the summary are similar to recommendations made by the External Task Force to review the Cooperative Water Program. Our responses to the recommendations of the Task Force can be found at <http://acwi.gov/coop2004/index.html>. The parts that are relevant to the issues included in your summary are excerpted in the appendix attached to this letter.

1. Strengthen Partnerships with Stakeholders. The collaborative nature and joint-funding structure of the Cooperative Water Program have traditionally made it both mandatory and desirable to have frequent communication at the Water Science Center level among scientists and managers from the USGS and from the Cooperating agencies. In meetings that traditionally have tended to be bilateral, the USGS and the Cooperators have discussed priorities for science and data collection, development of specific proposals, progress on existing projects, resolution of problems, and results of the efforts.

Multi-lateral discussions have been one of the more recent developments, and are on the rise and continue to be encouraged. The multi-lateral 5-year Strategic Planning Reviews held by many of our Water Science Centers, the annual USGS Customer Listening Sessions, and the two recent National Stakeholder Roundtables on the Cooperative Water Program exemplify this trend. We agree with the suggestion to try a Regional approach to multi-lateral cooperator communications, and would like to explore with you how we might proceed to implement this idea.

Additional thoughts about strengthening partnerships with stakeholders are included below in section 2 under the subheading, "Expand opportunities for in-kind contributions," and in section 1 of the appendix.

2. Improve Funding, Funding Base, and Cost Containment

Restore the funding ratio in the CWP to 50:50. We are keenly aware that the funding share shouldered by cooperators has increased from 50 percent to about 70 percent in recent decades, and we share the concern that this places an increasingly heavy burden on the cooperators. We will continue dialogues with stakeholders, with the Department of the Interior, and others about this issue. Any resolution will have to take into account the limited new funding available to the Department and the Bureau during these challenging budgetary times, and the many priorities that vie for the available dollars. Stakeholder input is crucial to this process. The fiscal year (FY) 2007 appropriations bills for the USGS, as currently approved individually by the House and Senate, would fund the Cooperative Water Program at the FY 2006 level plus a 2-percent increase to cover inflation of fixed costs. The USGS response to the Task Force on this topic is included in section 2 of the appendix.

Enhance funding for the National Streamflow Information Program as a means to fund some of the highest priority streamgages. The USGS is committed to the concept of a Federally funded backbone for the National streamgaging network, and will continue to implement it as funds are available. Based on recent action in the House and Senate we are optimistic that the proposed increase in NSIP for 2007 will be enacted.

Here are three other items that may be of interest on the subject of USGS streamgages:

D Changes in the USGS streamgaging network take place every year as a result of changes in requirements and changes in available funding among the more than 800 agencies that participate in funding the network. The numbers we report here are national totals. There are significant regional differences in network trends with some States or river basins having a stable or growing network while other States or river basins show decreases. Nationally, the total number of continuous record stream gages declined by 178 between Water Year 2004 and 2005, from a total of 7627 to 7449.

D In evaluating trends in the network we also pay close attention to our long-record streamgages (those with 30 or more years of record). The long-record streamgages are particularly important to water resources and infrastructure planning and to the analysis of longterm changes in water availability, drought characteristics and flood hazards. In 2005, we reactivated 29 long-record streamgages but had to discontinue 142. Although we are not all the way through Water Year 2006, it appears to us that these kinds of trends are continuing.

D The use of our data continues to increase. Our NWIS Web database (which contains all of our historical and real-time data for streamflow, water chemistry, and ground water levels) hit a new all-time record number of requests on June 28 of this year. The average number of data requests that our system fulfills has been averaging about 1 million per day over the past year. On June 28, 2006 we fulfilled about 1.9 million requests. This increased activity was, no doubt, triggered by the widespread flooding taking place in the Northeast at that time.

Expand opportunities for in-kind contributions. During the past two decades the way in which the USGS partners with the water resources community has been evolving. As funds to address water resource concerns have become scarcer and water resources problems have become more challenging, stakeholder organizations have joined together to do the work that is

necessary to address the water resources issue. State agencies, federal agencies, local governments, and tribal governments have banded together to develop strategies and work plans to provide the data, do the analyses, answer questions, and build the decision-making tools needed to address the water resource issue. This team then assesses the work tasks needed and divides up the work among them based on what each organization can easily and economically offer to the effort. Then they pool their cash resources to accomplish what project tasks none of them could provide.

The USGS has proven itself to be an important partner in these "stakeholder teams" that are addressing water resources issues. The USGS always brings valuable scientific expertise to the team. We can often draw on examples of similar issues and studies from across our nation wide program, we have a ready tool-box of non-proprietary software and models to bring to the issue, we have access to a cadre of world-class hydrologic research scientists in the USGS offices across the Nation, we have access to outstanding analytical laboratories and database management tools, and we often have a little Cooperative Water Program matching funds to throw into the mix.

More and more, the USGS has come to recognize the value and wisdom of cooperator participation in interpretive studies and data collection. The examples in section 1 of the appendix help to illustrate this point. Future meetings of USGS water program leadership will place emphasis on the value of such collaborations. This approach represents a culture change for many in the USGS water program, but, it is the right thing to do and many of our field managers are already recognizing it and implementing it. We are also working on a guidance document for our Water Science Centers and their current and potential streamgaging partners, laying out the options and requirements for successful collaborative efforts in streamgaging. We will promote the continuation of this evolutionary change.

Improve the cost-effectiveness of the CWP. The USGS has established two teams to look at options for improving the cost-effectiveness of the Streamgaging Program. One team, headed by Robert Holmes, has been comparing streamgaging costs among the USGS and three State or local entities that also conduct streamgaging. The other, headed by Scott Gain, is looking at USGS operations to search for ways to save money without compromising quality. We look forward to sharing the draft reports of these teams with the stakeholder community for review and comment prior to being finalized, and we are interested in meeting with representatives of the cooperator community to discuss them. As described in the attached document, we are also committed to examining options and examples for improving cost-effectiveness by increasing cooperator involvement in data collection and interpretive studies where such involvement promises to help reduce overall costs.

In the work of the stream gaging cost comparison team, an attempt was made to ensure that costs were compared for similar activities and budget items. Results so far indicate that the USGS is comparable in cost to the local streamgaging entity, but, more expensive than the two State agencies. Most of the difference in cost is attributable to administrative and facilities costs at the USGS. The USGS has been directed by the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that administrative and facilities costs attributable to reimbursable programs are funded through those reimbursable programs, and not through

Congressional appropriations. The USGS uses more labor per streamgauge, in both the field and the office, than the non-Federal entities, resulting in a higher labor charge per stream gauge for the USGS.

Due to differences in the intended uses of the streamflow data collected, there are substantial differences between the USGS streamflow data and the data collected by the two state agencies. These differences include number and frequency of calibration measurements made, frequency of updates of adjustments of calibration (rating curves), and timing and availability of the dissemination of both provisional and final streamflow data. Our analysis to-date strongly suggests that those streamgaging programs that operate at significantly lower average cost per streamgauge provide a substantially different type of product for many of their stream gages than the product produced by the USGS. We invite our stakeholders to identify other streamgaging operations with which we can compare our approaches, costs, and delivery mechanisms, and to provide further comment on the comparisons already made. All ideas for improved efficiency of the network are welcome.

Make Provision for More Stakeholders to Contribute their Fair Share. As funding has become tighter for streamgaging, the USGS has actively sought participation by additional funding partners. Whenever funding for a streamgauge is threatened, a message to that effect is posted on the web site for that streamgauge's data, so that all data users can be informed about the impending loss of the station; and may have an opportunity to contribute to the continued operation of the streamgauge. In addition, Water Science Center managers are always seeking additional funding partners for streamgages. In some instances novel approaches have been used, such as using the gift authority to accept funds from private entities. These efforts will be continued and expanded as you recommend. Exploration of strategies for expanding the cooperator base would be a worthwhile topic for future discussions with your organizations. We fully agree with its importance and note that new cooperators are added to the program each year. We would, however, add a note of caution. Extensive efforts to add new cooperators come at a real cost in terms of the time invested by scientists, managers, and administrative staff.

3. Fund Data Collection First. The USGS places a high value on long-term data-collection activities. The USGS commitment to maintaining a consistent long-term data-collection network is reflected not only in our contributions from the CWP, but also from other data-oriented water programs such as: the National Streamflow Information Program, the National Water Quality Assessment, the Ground-Water Resources Program, and the Hydrologic Networks and Analysis Program, which includes data-collection activities such as the National Stream Quality Accounting Network (NASQAN), the Benchmark Network for water-quality monitoring in relatively pristine headwater areas, and the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP). Along with our commitment to these long-term data-collection programs, however, goes a similar commitment to interpretive studies that inform the Nation and our cooperators about the messages contained in the data we collect. A body of long-term data is of crucial importance, but its value is not fully realized without a corresponding body of applied science and research that interprets the data, advances understanding of hydrologic processes, and stimulates the development of new data-collection techniques. The Nation benefits directly from USGS data, but also benefits from the synthesis of regional knowledge that USGS scientists bring together and publish in the form of interpretive reports and in the form of deterministic or statistical

models that can be used for planning, design, and decision making. The value of the USGS water science staff is greatly increased because it is a mix of staff engaged in data collection along with a cadre of trained scientists who can study and interpret the data.

The States, tribes, local government, other Federal agencies, and the public depend on the hydrologic knowledge and scientific capacity of the USGS workforce to help them evaluate hydrologic systems and resolve new and emerging water resource issues. Defending long-term data networks without supporting USGS interpretive studies would result in a staff that would be much less able to provide a robust suite of services to the Nation. Without a strong interpretive and research program, the USGS would lack the staff that will enable it to contribute to new and emerging water issues at the regional or national scale. USGS leadership seeks to maintain a balance among long-term data, interpretive studies, and research in its water science portfolio.

The balance between data and studies in the CWP is not dictated by Headquarters or Regions, but is left to the discretion of Water Science Center (WSC) Directors, who are in frequent communication with State and local cooperators regarding the needs of the water-resources community in each State. This leads to variations from one WSC to another, but in aggregate the balance and funding levels have remained relatively steady.

One step in dealing with this issue is to ensure that we have accurate information about the history of expenditures on data and studies within the CWP. The USGS has relied on centrally reported expenditures in "data accounts" (project accounts intended primarily for surface-water, ground-water, water-quality, sediment, precipitation, and water-use data collection) to account for the data effort. In 2006, we have begun checking these records with Water Science Center Directors and verifying the data expenditures in greater detail. We will continue to track these expenditures more closely each year.

A careful analysis of FY 2005 expenditures in the CWP shows that nationwide, 57 percent of expenditures of Federal funds were in the data accounts, and 43 percent were for studies that were primarily interpretive. This distribution of the Federal funds demonstrates an emphasis on data collection. In addition, the matching ratio of Federal to non-Federal funds in each category also reflects an emphasis on data collection. The ratio of Federal funds to cooperator funds in the data category in FY 2005 was 37:63, while the ratio in the studies category was 32:68. In other words, current management practice is to slightly favor data activities over interpretive studies in terms of the allocation of Federal matching funds.

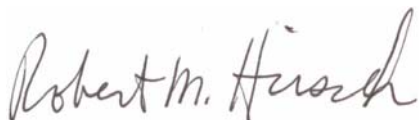
Traditionally, Federal funding in the Cooperative Water Program has increased slightly each year to cover inflation, with occasional additional increases that bring about slight program growth. That situation was suitable for providing consistent long-term funding for data collection, as long as cooperator funding was available. In recent years, however, flat or slightly declining Federal funding, with little or no increase to cover inflation, has eroded the purchasing power of the Federal side for both data collection and studies. When cooperator budgets cannot pick up the slack, the program is faced with the difficult prospect of discontinuing needed data collection stations as well as cutting back on studies. This issue has been prominently addressed by cooperators in their communications with policy makers, and their voices have been heard. The President's proposed FY 2007 budget contains a \$2.3 million increase for the National

Streamflow Information Program, to help slow the gradual erosion of the stream gaging network. Furthermore, the proposed \$2.0 million cut in the Cooperative Water Program was aimed specifically at interpretive studies, and not at data collection.

The USGS will continue to monitor this issue and discuss it regularly in leadership meetings. Where trends show a disproportionate decline in the data collection program compared with interpretive studies, the USGS will seek to protect the data collection network. The USGS will also continue to explore, through the National Streamflow Information Program and other federally funded data-collection programs, the possibility of full federal funding for a core set of streamgages and for other data-collection activities. The USGS response to the Task Force on this issue is included in section 3 of the appendix.

Again, we thank you for your continuing interest in the Cooperative Water Program and its future. We welcome a continuing dialogue and hope that you will feel free to respond.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Hirsch
Associate Director for Water

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Glenn G. Patterson Coordinator,
Cooperative Water Program

Attachment: Appendix

Copies to: Assistant Secretary-Water and Science Assistant
Deputy Secretary- Water and Science Acting
Director USGS

Appendix

Excerpts from USGS Response to the External Task Force to Review the Cooperative Water Program

(Full text of the USGS response to the Task Force report can be viewed at http://acwi.gov/coop2004/response_tfreport.pdf)

1. Fostering better working relationships with cooperators. The Task Force recommended that, in the interest of cost-efficiency and effective use of resources, the USGS should reexamine the use of in-kind service credit and continue to look for ways to foster better working relationships with cooperators.

During the past two decades the way in which USGS partners with the water resources community has been evolving. As funds to address water resource concerns have become scarcer and water resources problems have become more challenging, stakeholder organizations have joined together to do the work that is necessary to address the water resources issue. State agencies, federal agencies, local governments, and tribal governments have banded together to develop strategies and work plans to provide the data, do the analyses, answer questions, and build the decision-making tools needed to address the water resource issue. This team then assesses the work tasks needed and divides up the work among them based on what each organization can easily and economically offer to the effort. Then they pool their cash resources to accomplish what project tasks none of them could provide.

USGS has proven itself to be an outstanding partner in these "stakeholder teams" that are addressing water resources issues. USGS always brings additional scientific expertise to the team, we can often draw on applicable examples from a nation-wide program, we have a ready tool-box of non-proprietary software and models to bring to the issue, we have access to outstanding analytical laboratories and database management tools, and we often have a little Cooperative Water Program matching funds to throw into the mix.

The policy of the USGS is to embrace cooperator participation in interpretive studies and data collection when doing so is in the interest of the project. We will be giving internal publicity to this policy and to some of the following examples of such collaboration:

Examples of Collaboration on Interpretive Studies:

Oregon: For about 15 years, the Oregon Water Resources Department has collocated two State employees in the USGS Oregon Water Science Center office. These two State employees have desks in the USGS office and spend several days a week there working cooperatively on groundwater studies and models. State and local agencies rely on these studies and models to make prudent management decisions regarding withdrawals of ground water for irrigation, industrial, and public-supply use. Over the 15 years, they have worked together with USGS scientists to conduct and plan studies in 5 different watersheds (the Portland Basin, Willamette Basin, Deschutes Basin, Klamath Basin, and most recently the Umatilla Basin) and have co-authored

over 20 products with USGS co-authors. Having the cooperators on-site, working directly with USGS scientists, has increased communication with the State on these studies and on other issues, leading to joint planning of studies and development of county workshops aimed at providing additional expertise to their efforts. State employee involvement also has brought additional geology and data synthesis expertise to USGS studies. It has also ensured that the models are put into useful service in the hands of capable, trained employees. Most importantly, this close association has ensured real-time feedback on tasks accomplished by USGS scientists, ensuring that products are on target and immediately useful for the State.

Oklahoma: The USGS is working in partnership with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) to conduct a study of the Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer and develop a ground-water model that can be used to ensure that management alternatives will maintain flows from streams and springs connected to the aquifer. OWRB, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, USGS, and the Chickasaw Tribe are the funding partners for this project. A representative from the OWRB manages the overall project and chairs a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the Water Resources Board, USGS, EPA, Oklahoma State University, and the Oklahoma Geological Survey. This committee provides technical expertise and synthesis of project activities. Specifically, the OWRB is providing management assistance to the project and collecting most of the hydrologic data needed, including ground-water-level data, stream flows, and water use data, and providing GIS support. The Oklahoma Mesonet is providing basic climatic data. The University of Oklahoma is evaluating past climatic conditions using tree ring analyses, and predicting rainfall, runoff, and ground-water recharge to the aquifer using NEXRAD data. Oklahoma State University is providing field assistance, literature reviews, and technical expertise regarding the geology and fracturing of the aquifer. The USGS is doing streamflow monitoring, ground-water modeling, geochemistry, analyses of well hydraulics, and GIS support, and is developing an Earth vision geologic model and gravity geophysics as part of separate studies of the area. Other stakeholders, including city governments and special interest groups, are also involved in the project. So again, here is another example of a strong partnership within the water resources community to address complex and critical aquifer use issues.

Examples of Collaboration on Data Collection:

Virginia: For 25 years the USGS Virginia Water Science Center and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) have been collaborating on data collection at about 150 stream gages. VDEQ uses USGS protocols and equipment to install and operate gages, make measurements, and work records. The State provides quality assurance and enters the records directly into the USGS National Water Information System database under a flag that signifies "Station operated by VDEQ". USGS provides training and mentoring; access to the USGS Hydrologic Instrumentation Facility for procurement of equipment, access to the real-time data network, and access to the National Water Information System for entering records.

Oregon: The USGS Oregon Water Science Center collaborates with several entities on a multiyear data collection program. In this case, the Nez Perce Tribe is the primary cooperator to the USGS, but the Grande Ronde Model Watershed Program and the State of Oregon Water Resources Department also are providing support. The project involves running a five-gage, surface-water network. Total cash outlay needed by the Tribe for the network was reduced by incorporating services from the two other agencies. An employee of the Watershed Program conducts the field work associated with the gages and the Water Resources Department computes and checks the discharge record. The USGS trained the Watershed Program employee collecting the data, operates four DCPs in the network, reviews and provides *QA/QC* on the field work and records

computations, and publishes the data. In addition to requiring less cash outlay for the Tribe, this partnership also benefited the Watershed Program by keeping their employee well trained on discharge measurement techniques. Also, more measurements were obtained and problems were fixed more quickly by a local Watershed Program person than they would have been if maintained by a USGS employee located about 2.5 hours away from the network.

Other States with similar examples of data-collection collaborations include California, Texas, and New Jersey.

The USGS will continue to inventory examples of successful collaborations in which cooperators contribute effort as well as funding to a project, and will publicize these examples throughout the Water Resources Discipline. Additional ideas for forging successful working partnerships, including use of credit for in-kind services will be encouraged where appropriate. In addition, the USGS has convened a Streamgaging Cost Efficiency Committee to look at ways of improving the cost-effectiveness of the streamgaging program. One of the measures the Committee is considering is to increase use of such collaborations. This is expected to result in more formal policies and practices embracing such collaborations.

2. Funding for the Cooperative Water Program

The Task Force emphasized that they consider full funding of the CWP (restoration of a 50:50 matching ratio) as the highest priority of all the recommendations. The USGS acknowledges the recent trend toward cooperators bearing an increasing share of the cost of the CWP, and agrees that bringing the match ratio back closer to the traditional 50:50 would be appropriate for a true partnership. Federal funding for all programs of the USGS and all of the Department of the Interior is very limited. Many excellent programs are funded at levels that are less than their stakeholders wish. Difficult funding choices must be made, and stakeholder input is crucial to this priority-setting process. The USGS also recognizes that this recommendation, combined with the recommendation to emphasize data collection, carries special significance for funding related to data collection. The USGS will continue a dialogue on this issue with stakeholders

and budget officials. In these discussions the CWP will be mentioned along with other funding mechanisms for related work, such as the National Streamflow Information Program.

3. Balance between data collection and interpretive studies. The Task Force recommended (10.1) that the USGS should place emphasis on data collection, rather than interpretive studies, in the CWP. The Task Force recognized the continuing importance of interpretive studies, but said the USGS needs to be careful not to reduce data-collection efforts.

As stated in the report, the USGS places a high value on long-term data-collection activities. The USGS commitment to maintaining a consistent long-term data-collection network is reflected not only in our contributions from the CWP, but also from other data-oriented water programs such as the National Streamflow Information Program, the National Water Quality Assessment, the Ground-Water Resources Program, and the Hydrologic Networks and Analysis Program, which includes data-collection activities such as the National Stream Quality Accounting Network (NASQAN), the Benchmark Network for water-quality monitoring in relatively pristine headwater areas, and the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP). Along with our commitment to these long-term data-collection programs, however, goes a similar commitment to interpretive studies that inform the Nation and our cooperators about the messages contained in the data we collect. A body of long-term data is of crucial importance, but its value is not fully realized without a corresponding body of applied science and research that interprets the data, advances understanding of hydrologic processes, and stimulates the development of new data-collection techniques. The real value of the USGS to the Nation stems from this combination of data and a cadre of trained scientists who can study and interpret the science contained in the data.

The States, tribes, local government, other Federal agencies, and the public depend on the hydrologic knowledge and scientific capacity of the USGS workforce to help them evaluate hydrologic systems and resolve new and emerging water resource issues. Defending long-term data networks without supporting USGS interpretive studies would result in incomplete hydrologic-science service to the Nation. USGS leadership seeks to maintain a balance among long-term data, interpretive studies, and research in its water science portfolio.

The balance between data and studies in the CWP is not dictated by Headquarters or Regions, but is left to the discretion of Water Science Center (WSC) Directors, who are in frequent communication with State and local cooperators regarding the needs of the water-resources community in each State. This leads to variations from one WSC to another, but in aggregate the balance and funding levels have remained relatively steady.

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A careful analysis of FY '05 expenditures in the CWP shows that nationwide, 57 percent of expenditures of Federal funds were in the data accounts, and 43 percent were for studies that were primarily interpretive. This distribution of the Federal funds demonstrates an emphasis on

data collection. In addition, the matching ratio of Federal to non-Federal funds in each category also reflects an emphasis on data collection. The proportion of Federal funds in the data category in FY '05 was 37 percent, while the proportion in the studies category was 32 percent.

Traditionally Federal funding in the Cooperative Water Program has increased slightly each year to cover inflation, with occasional additional increases that bring about slight program growth. That situation was suitable for providing consistent long-term funding for data collection, as long as cooperator funding was available. In recent years, however, flat or slightly declining Federal funding, with little or no increase to cover inflation, has eroded the purchasing power of the Federal side for both data collection and studies. When cooperator budgets cannot pick up the slack, the program is faced with the difficult prospect of discontinuing needed data-collection stations as well as cutting back on studies. This issue has been prominently addressed by cooperators in their communications with policy makers, and their voices have been heard. The President's proposed FY 2007 budget contains a \$2.3 million increase for the National Streamflow Information Program, to help stem the gradual erosion of the streamgaging network. Furthermore, the proposed \$.7 million cut in the Cooperative Water Program is aimed specifically at interpretive studies, and not at data collection.

The USGS will continue to examine this issue in greater detail, including trends. Where trends show a disproportionate decline in the data collection program compared with interpretive studies, USGS will seek ways to protect the data collection network. USGS will also continue to explore, through the National Streamflow Information Program and other federally funded data-collection programs, the possibility of full Federal funding for a core set of stream gages and for other data-collection activities.