Mission Report
8-12 February 2015

The National Institutes for Water Resources
2015 Annual Meeting

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Objectives of the Mission

The primary objective of this mission was to represent OSU-IWW at the 2015 National Institutes for Water Research annual conference. In that capacity I met with five members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation as per the guidance of Dr. Todd Jarvis, Director of the OSU-IWW and with the assistance of Ms. Gabrielle Serra, Director of Federal Relations at OSU.

I. National Institutes for Water Research 2015 Annual Meeting

A complete file of meeting documents is attached to this brief.

MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY

I.1 The orientation briefing presented by the NIWR lobby group, Van Scoyoc Associates helped update us as to the present status of the 2015 USGS appropriation (U.S.$6.5 million) in support of the NIWR (and the Water Resources Research Act) and its proposal for funding in fiscal year 2016 (U.S.$6.5 million with a recommendation for an additional U.S.$2 million). Please note that there is a separate document in the conference materials that address the rationale for seeking an increase in f.y.2016 allotments in support of NIWR-related activities.

I.2 The keynote presentation by Dr. Catherine Woteki, Undersecretary for Research, Education & Economics, USDA, provided an overview of the support of the USDA for the goals of the NIWR in the context of water to the goals of the newly created Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research. The Foundation will help the USDA partner with organizations outside of the formal Federal Government structure, such as the NIWR through generating matching funds. An initial grant of U.S.$200 million was provided by Congress for this Foundation. As explained this new Foundation, OSU-IWW could attract matching funds by agreeing to work with a non-Federal Government partner (who would provide funding) including NGOs, foreign Governments and universities, International Organizations, U.S. State Governments, and private sector groups. In this manner the Foundation would allow OSU-IWW to match a partner’s financing to complete a proposed budget.

I.3 The Acting Director of the USGS, Dr. Suzette Kimball, noted the major increase in the funding request for f.y.2016 to U.S.$6.5 billion, representing a substantial increase from f.y. 2015 of U.S.$3.5 billion. This request for increase in funding is based largely on the reality of competing water uses in a number of sectors. The USGS is a big supporter of the NIWR. The NIWR has been zeroed-out in the USGS draft budgets at the drafting stage in 10 of the past 15 years, but always managed to “sweep” by with some level of agency support. The USGS has taken a new stance in noting the strategic national security relationship with water research. Dr. Kimball feels “we have now turned the corner” and she hopes that the U.S.$3.5 million support level allows the Institutes to “at least think about the future.” She pledged her “continued and strong support for the
partnership between the USGS and the Institutes and the academic communities in which the Institutes reside. The past two years have quite literally turned around our enduring partnership.”

Among the most pressing issues the Acting Director noted are the following points:

- Next generation of scientists. The Institutes play a vital role as do community colleges. In training the next generation of scientific leaders. Internships provide through Institutes are a “great training laboratory” for future leaders.
- Partnership opportunities with other USGS mission areas. “Water Science for the 21st Century” program offers “great opportunities for collaboration.” The extraction of gas and oil offer us an “opportunity for undertaking cutting-edge research” to advance scientific knowledge and decision-making.
- Partnership with other DOI Bureaus (NPS, BLM, BOR)
- Broad expertise of university faculty. The USGS has to “do a better job of utilizing the scientific expertise in our universities.”

I.4 Dr. David Blockstein of the National Council for Science and the Environment (This is DISTINCT from the National Center for Science and Environment, both carry the NCSE acronym) and Dr. Dale Manty of the USEPA addressed the role of partnerships in improving the quality of science through synergies of scientists and organizations. The NCSE works with all sectors of society and the University Affiliates Program. Oregon State is a member of this program and through that program universities support faculty in undertaking research and promoting interdisciplinary education. The USEPA statement was very general. They are looking for ways to expand is partnership with NIWR-related Institutes. One such program is the Star Research Program supporting graduate student research. He did note the Oregon project to use treated water in the production of beer; a project funded by the EPA.

I.5 Dr. Bill Werkheiser, Associate Director for Water at USGS spoke at the luncheon. He talked about water availability and our notion of having sufficient quantities of clean water without interruption. He specifically noted the increasing pressure on ground water supplies as droughts become more frequent and pronounced. In this regard the Institutes are going to play an ever-increasing role in undertaking basic research required for policy makers to take the “correct” decisions. He also noted that the 2016 the USGS budget has been restructured from 7 line items to 4 line items in an attempt to consolidate the various components of their technical, scientific and managerial activities. For example all of the ground and surface water monitoring projects will be in a single budget line and not divided under several programs.

I.6 Dr. Jeremy Pickard, Associate Director at the Advanced Technology Environmental and Energy Center (ATEEC) presented an overview of the work that is undertaken by his organization (attached summary document).

I.7 A panel including Dr. Susan White of North Carolina, and Dr. Earl Greene and Dr. Melanie Stansbury of the USGS reviewed the three-year review of the USGS/NIWR
partnership. A one-page summary of the partnership to date is attached. The organizing group recently met as to the goals for the partnership for the 2015 period. A couple subject areas were agree on: i) hydraulic fracturing (fracking), drought, disinfection by-products and pharmaceuticals. Several suggestions were made to add to this short list and the review committee will assess these and then redefine the new priorities. The topics of groundwater resources and groundwater recharge were two that were heavily supported by the participants.

Dr. Stansbury noted the important role of OMB in terms of helping the agencies prepare their budgets. They take the policy priorities of the White House and ensure that they get included into the programs of the technical offices such as the USGS with sufficient budgetary support. Dr. Stansbury is the (single person) reviewer of the USGS budgetary submissions for OMB. The present Administration has 4 priorities that directly impact the USGS: i) promoting resilience in the face of climate change, ii) enabling environmentally and socially sound water management, iii) providing and integrating water data pools into policy and managerial streams, and iv) empowering the next generation of water managers to fill the thousands of Federal positions that will be vacated by “baby boomers” in the next decade. These are all very broad mandates and have many specific objectives. But Dr. Stansbury noted that the President has insisted on billions of dollars of increases in the budget he submitted for f.y. 2016 to address climate change and particularly drought-flood issues. The USGS is expecting a more collaborative relationship with the Institutes in 2015 and beyond with the aim of assisting the Survey better understand what the needs are “in the field.”

Dr. Earl Greene discussed the annual report and the three-year review of the NIWR. He indicated that the detail included in these reports should be improved through better communications between the NIWR and the Institutes. He stressed that the future of the NIWR depends on our joint commitment and involvement. He outlined a number of new goals including: i) reducing the reporting function by the Institutes to a short report of 3-5 pages instead of the hundreds of pages of State reports that his office must now review, ii) improve the NIWR.net, iii) streamline the internal USGS grants process and reduce the review/approval timeline to a maximum of 30d-days, iv) publish a synthesis report of the regional and national hydrologic issues, and v) host regional sciences conferences on national priorities.

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY / WEDNESDAY 11 FEBRUARY

1.8 During the “Infoshare” session on Tuesday I was allotted 5 minutes to note the advances and current activities of the IWW as per Todd Jarvis’ 31 January email (attached). In terms of our international efforts, and given our special role as a partner in a UNESCO category 2 center, I specifically noted:

- Our integral relationship with USACE-ICIWaRM-IWR and through them the UNESCO-IHP program. I noted that IWW had representation at the IHP meeting (Richard Meganck) in June 2014 in Paris and supported the U.S. Delegation (which included ICIWaRM participation).
• The MoU with the Government of Korea and how it may lead to training programs for Koreans at the University, expanding our outreach efforts in a very tangible manner.
• Our representation on the Governing Board of Hidroex (Richard Meganck) and how these relationships offer great potential for future projects between UNESCO category 2 centers.
• The ability to attract fully funded graduate students to OSU through the Brazilian Science Without Borders program.
• The OSU-IHE-UoP joint MSc degree program and the synergy that such an effort offers for both students and faculty, particularly in terms of joint research.

In terms of our regional and national efforts and how IWW activities fit into and support the WRRA and the NIWR, I specifically noted:

• The Humanitarian Engineering Initiative at OSU.
• The efforts on stormwater treatment and river hydraulics research.
• The continued use of video in research activities (noting that other State Institutes are currently experimenting with this technology).
• The proposed Heated Waters conference with OR, WA, ID and WY.
• Finally, I noted our support to increase NIWR activities in regional projects and research efforts and specifically in better managing our ground water resources.

The Montana Water Institute asked that Todd Jarvis respond to the attached survey.

1.9 Dr. Reagan Waskom addressed the issue of the size of the Institutes and how to have a larger impact than would be expected given the minimal resources that are normally associated with such centers; “…a what could we accomplish if…approach.” Dr. Rick Cruse noted that he considers NIWR being “invited to the White House to speak to water issues and priorities” to be his goal. He said this concept can be employed in developing a NIWR plan for the next few years.

The participants were asked to propose new ideas and the following emerged:

• developing more active partnerships on specific issues such as groundwater recharge.
• that NIWR be asked to be a peer-reviewer for the CEQ processes or to the EPA Science Committee
• identify experimental watersheds and ask the university community at large to use the se areas for their research and outreach efforts; referred to as a “wired watershed” to be developed in each State, using s similar methodology and then share the results across the NIWR network
• strengthening NIWR participation in K-12 programs
• a national conference aimed at students or young professionals to present their research
• engage the university Extension Service to help broadcast the NIWR message
• prepare a series of short “white papers” on key NIWR topics and widely distribute them
• training students at all levels in water supply, community resilience in confronting hazards, and maintaining water quality by controlling nutrients
• better utilize the NIWR database through employing “104 b and g” groups
• a regional island conference
• using 4H clubs as a vector for communicating with the K-12 audience about water issues
• develop a short paper for Science on how NIWR fits into the President’s water priorities
• host “NIWR technical briefings” for Congressional staff
• encourage more “across State” collaboration through an action plan as to how we are going to deal with priority issues so that we can increase our impact on the Hill
• develop success stories on a regional basis for publication
• engage more directly with the WET program in K-12 education activities and outreach
• provide guidance to local watershed committees on how to prepare an effective watershed plan
• foster development of a State watershed leadership program based on the Oregon effort currently underway
• a national “branding” effort for State programs that gives recognition to NIWR in the same fashion as the “Sea Grant” label provides for many State programs
• Ditto for the NIWR logo so that wider recognition is garnered
• Pool resources to address shared water issues on a regional basis
• Move from basic and applied science to “actionable science” in terms of communicating with a wider audience
• Do a better job of communicating the impact of science to the daily lives of the general public
• ask each Institute identify TWO areas of expertise and then prepare a “map of expertise” that NIWR can offer

The NIWR Secretariat will compile these ideas for the partnership committee for wider distribution to the NIWR membership.

I.10 Dr. Joe Manous of the USACE-IWR provided an update on the activities of the Corps. The attached summary is very interesting and provides a guide for the types and size of grants that the Corps provided in recent years. The Corps is particularly concerned that many of the research grants awarded do not have sufficient follow-up in terms of performance indicators. Please note the next RFP is in mid-March. He is particularly interested in receiving suggestions for research topics to be included in the next RFP.

I.11 Dr. Beth Stuever communications specialist from Michigan State University addressed the issue of social networks and their potential impact on the operations of the NIWR network, based on her work with Michigan State Agricultural Extension Service.
She highlighted growing the number of clients and protecting the brand of an institution. Her comment that “social media has changed everything” led to the State of Michigan mandating a growth in the numbers and types of people that the Extension Service reached every year. Using social media and using the web pro-actively have greatly expanded the possibilities for complying with the legislative mandate. MSU updates its Extension website EVERY DAY. She presented a very detailed analysis of who visits their website, where they are from, how long they visit the site, how they find the website, etc.

II. Meetings with Oregon Congressional Delegation

II.1 First, I want to note the support of Ms. Gabrielle Serra in organizing and confirming meetings with five members of the OR Congressional Delegation. I left a complete NIWR file with each Congressional Member’s office along with copies of both Todd’s and Gabrielle’s calling cards.

As per Ms. Serra’s suggestion to do a bit of web research, I was able to determine that our two Senators voted “no” on H.R.83 (2015 appropriation bill) but not on the substance of USGS budget. They voted no because the bill only included short-term funding for the DHS included by the Republicans to limit implementation of President Obama’s executive order on immigration. Therefore, I think it was legitimate to thank them for their support. Specifically, Senator Merkley is a member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee that recommended restoration of $3M in funding for the WRRA program in FY 2015 to bring it to a total appropriation of $6.5M.

The three members of the House that I met with DeFazio, Schrader and Bonamici, voted “nay” essentially for the same reasons that our Senators did. Still each of them supports the goals of the USGS and the water institutes. Representative Blumenauer voted “nay” while Representative Walden voted “yea.” In other words the Delegation voted along party lines. I did not meet with either Blumenauer or Walden.

Two websites that may be helpful are:
House vote on final passage of HR 83 December 2014:
http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll563.xml

Senate vote on final passage of HR 83 December 2014:

II.2 I undertook the Congressional visits (staff of the Member) as per the attached schedule and completed a follow-up form for each of these visits that were passed to the NIWR.

I told each staff member that I was there for three principle reasons:
I thanked them for supporting water issues and expressed our understanding for not supporting the full appropriation bill given the riders that would have restricted funding for Homeland Security.

I told them that I wanted to briefly update them on the international and State/Regional activities undertaken by and through the OSU-IWW.

I asked them for their continued support for the WRRI and NIWR through the USGS line item of a minimum of U.S.$6.5 million and if possible for the increase of U.S.$2.3 million (total of U.S.$8.8 million) as recommended by the NIWR.

In every visit, I was assured that the Congressman or Senator supported water issues, supported for the Institutes through the USGS line item, and would support the request for increased funding to the U.S.$8.8 million. All Members agreed to speak with or send letters of support to either Senator Merkley or to the House or Senate Appropriations Committees.

II.3 I have noted some of the more important comments and issues that may require follow-up.

- Sen. Wyden, met with Erin Fauerbach. Requested that we send her an electronic copy of the proposal for the heated waters conference. Ms. Fauerbach also assured me that the Senator would speak directly to Senator Merkley concerning the requested level of support for f.y.2016.
- Sen. Merkley, met with Adrian Deveny (Becca Ward was out of office ill). Mr. Deveny specifically asked us to prepare a proposal for grant funding from both the USGS and the USACE and to send copies of such proposals to him prior to 1 March so that any such ideas can be included in a document that will be prepared for input to the Appropriations Committee. The Senator will support funding at the U.S.$8.5 million level for f.y.2016. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and a member of the Interior Sub-Committee.
- Rep. Bonamici, met with Eric Fitch. Eric asked me “why doesn’t OSU have a larger share of the funding given its large and important role in international activities. He could not understand why the funds approved had to be equally shared among the 56 Institutes.
- Rep. DeFazio, met with Megan DeBates. Ms. DeBates clearly stated that the Congressman would strongly and pro-actively support the appropriation request for f.y.2016.

THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY

I used this additional half-day to meet with a number of organizations as follows:

III. Related Meetings / Other Issues:

- I met with Dr. Robert Petrowsky, Director of the USACE - IWR and the U.S. Category II Center, ICIWaRM. I provided him with an overview of the NIWR
meeting and noted that the comments by Joe Manous were well received. He specifically asked “what else can we do for you?” He wants any ideas for additional funding needs. He also volunteered to write a letter to Sen Merkley’s office in his role as a member of the Appropriations Committee to support an increase in the NIWR allocation. Finally, he told me that he is looking forward to his visit to campus and asked specifically to meet with Gabrielle Serra’s office as well as the VP for International Research.

- I held brief meetings with the Organization of American States, Dr. Richard Huber, and Dra. Maria Donoso, Inter-American Development Bank.
- I met with Dr. Carole Abourached, a recent OSU PhD graduate, who is working in Washington, D.C.
- I expressed my support for the NIWR request to gather a “sense of the membership” for the idea of NIWR supporting a booth at the upcoming World Water Forum in Korea.
- I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Joe Manous of the USACE-IWR on the status of the ORISE fellowship. I mentioned that my IPA relationship with the Corps will end this month. He reiterated his belief that all of the paperwork for the new relationship should be completed and submitted by month’s end.