

**Water Information and Data Subcommittee
State Capabilities Assessment Workgroup (Workgroup #1)**

Minutes – November 30, 2011

Attendees: Dan Hardin (TX), Jodee Pring (WY), Lindy Clay (OK), Molly Maupin (USGS), Bret Bruce (USGS)

Next Call: Week of January 9th, watch for future Doodle Poll.

Following brief introductions from all of the workgroup members, we proceeded to follow the agenda:

Review Project Purpose: Dwane gave a brief overview of the Water Use Data Exchange Project. He discussed the role of the four workgroups. He also explained some of the Water Information and Data Subcommittee discussion on this project, particularly in regards to benefits and risks. Some of the benefits defined by the subcommittee include:

- States are struggling with the same issues of determining the best approach for determining water availability.
- States are struggling maintaining staff to support home-grown models. Need a more sustainable approach.
- Help states get ‘beyond their own boundaries’. Allow for better Regional collaboration.
- States are often bombarded with questions or requests for their data. By making the data available, in a common well-defined format, they can save time in dealing with multiple requests.
- Allow for better data comparisons between states and across state boundaries.
- Help answer National questions (as required by the Secure Water Act).
- Help in discussions with state legislators.

Some of the risks identified by the subcommittee include:

- Many states have different formats in place. We’ll need to consider how to best accommodate the work that the states have already done.
- Data can be used as both a ‘shield’ and a ‘weapon’.
- This will be a significant task to undertake. Although the WestFAST Liaison and WSWC staff will shoulder most of the work, it will require some commitment from state staff.

Review Workgroup Purpose: Dwane discussed the purpose of the workgroup. He explained that this workgroup was to provide a better understanding of the current data systems and data holdings of each state as well as the reporting requirements that each state requires of their water users. They will accomplish this by conducting a survey of the western states focusing on questions regarding:

1. Types of data collected
2. Methods used to store the data
3. Methods used to make the data available to the public, including formats
4. Methods used to estimate consumptive use (via coordination with Workgroup 2)

5. Water user reporting requirements and policies
6. Future development plans

A question was raised on how much the states knew about this effort. Dwane stated that all of the Council members had been briefed on the work that the subcommittee will perform, and how much the staff know depends on how well that information filtered down. The states that were on the phone said that they had been well informed from their WSWC representative. Dwane said that the states where there may be some communication work that needs to be done would be for Alaska and Arizona, since they haven't had much participation in recent WSWC meetings.

Dwane also clarified that the specific roles of the workgroup members is to act as a 'brain trust' to help in thinking through the materials that will be developed. Dwane committed to being the one who drafts most of the documents, but stated that he'll need the workgroup members to make sure that he's on the right page.

Bret Bruce asked about terms and definitions and how important that would be for this group. Dwane mentioned that this was also an item of discussion with Workgroup 2. This will particularly be an issue with trying to define the term 'Water Availability'. An outstanding question that we'll need to consider as a group is "Does this group need to tackle the definition issue prior to developing a survey?"

The group also discussed the proposed outputs and schedule for this workgroup. The two outputs from this group are: 1) A survey to be sent to the 18 states that are members of the WSWC, with the purpose of gathering an inventory of the information described above and 2) A report that synthesizes the information gathered in the survey. The target dates for the survey are to have the survey ready to send to the states by the end of January 2012. The states would then have 1 month to respond. Dwane would then compile that information into a report that would be complete in draft format by the end of March. The workgroup, subcommittee, and WSWC would then have an opportunity to review this document with the intent to finalize it by the end of June 2012. There was some concern that we make sure we give the states enough time to respond to the survey. It was agreed that 1 month would be sufficient. Molly recommended that we plan to be able to have enough time set aside to support the states as they're filling out the survey (to answer questions, etc.). Dwane said that he thought this was a good idea and that he'd plan accordingly.

State Capabilities Assessment Survey: The immediate work product that the group will work on is to develop a 'State Capabilities Assessment Survey'. This survey would go to the states sometime in the month of January 2012. Dwane said that he plans on drafting the survey following the 6 topic areas discussed above (with topic area 4 being covered by Workgroup 2). He suggested that the workgroup take a look at the six topic areas and confirm that this is the right information to be asking. Are there additional areas that we should consider? Are there any of these that we could get rid of? The group will consider this and get back to Dwane if they have any changes. **Action Item: Provide any changes to the six topic areas (as described in the background document) to Dwane.**

Dwane proposed that the workgroup make use of Google Docs for the generation of this survey. This will allow the group to edit the survey without having to send emails to the entire group. The group agreed to try this approach. Dwane will draft a 'straw-man' survey for the group to respond to. **Action Item: Dwane will draft a 'straw-man' survey and post in Google Docs.**

The group also agreed to follow the schedule as it has been proposed in the workgroup background document.

A question was raised on whether groundwater would also be considered as part of this effort. Dwane responded that he felt that it should be. With that in mind, it was suggested that we also consider that groundwater has some additional legal and temporal components to water availability. For example, certain basins have legal restrictions on how much water can be pumped. Additionally, if water is available today, and is being pumped at a certain rate, for how long will it be available.

There was also a question as to whether the name of the workgroup was correct. The view was that we really weren't looking at 'state capabilities', but rather their current practices. Dwane stated that the survey is looking at two different pieces 1) the policy side of what states can do related to water planning, and 2) the technical side of what they do with the data they collect (i.e. what types of servers do they use, how do they make it available to the public, etc.). It's this second piece where the term 'capabilities' comes in. The group agreed that considering this definition that the name of the group made sense.

Workgroup Leadership: Dwane expressed the need for a workgroup leader. His preference is that the workgroup leader be a state representative. The roles and responsibilities of this leader would be to lead calls, present findings to the Subcommittee, work with Dwane on project schedule adjustments or changes in direction, and provide general leadership for the workgroup. Dan Hardin (TX) agreed to be the workgroup leader.

Call Schedules: The group determined that the doodle poll approach to scheduling the call worked fairly well, and that we should follow that approach to schedule the next call. Dwane proposed the week of January 9th. Dwane will send out a Doodle poll for times during that week.

Other Items: None