

NOAA Science Advisory Board
Environmental Information Services Working Group (EISWG)
TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

- In 2003 the National Research Council (NRC) conducted a study of the interaction of the various sectors of the weather and climate enterprise on behalf of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This study was entitled “Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services” (Fair Weather Report) and it examined the roles and provided recommendations regarding the partnerships among three sectors, public, private, and academic. The NRC specifically recommended: “*The NWS [National Weather Service] should establish an independent advisory committee to provide ongoing advice to it on weather and climate matters...*”
- In 2004, NOAA issued its “Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information,” which applied to provision of all NOAA environmental information services, with the intent to improve the effectiveness of the “environmental information enterprise” composed of partnerships among public, private, and academic sectors, and defined NOAA’s responsibility to foster growth of the environmental information enterprise. After undergoing critical review, the Policy was ultimately revised in January 2006 to clarify NOAA’s recognition of the private sector; this clarification also highlighted “*NOAA’s willingness to consider creating a standing advisory body to support the NOAA partnership policy.*”
- Given this stated policy, NOAA initiated its consideration of an advisory body by seeking the advice of NOAA’s Science Advisory Board (SAB), the one Federal Advisory Committee to NOAA that considers questions relevant to the entire agency. The SAB, at its July 2006 meeting, reviewed the advisory mechanisms NOAA currently uses in support of NOAA’s Policy on Partnerships and concluded that a significant group of participants in the nation’s environmental information enterprise view NOAA’s use of these mechanisms as insufficient to effectively garner external advice. The SAB recommended NOAA establish an *ad hoc*, limited duration working group to examine and recommend advisory options for improving communications among the various public, private, and academic entities engaged in environmental information matters. In August of 2007, the SAB established the Working Group to Examine Advisory Options for Improving Communications among NOAA’s Partners (referred to as the Partnerships Working Group or PWG).
- In March 2008, the PWG recommended the SAB 1) establish a standing working group of the SAB to address environmental information services across NOAA with a focus on interactions with the NWS, and 2) evaluate after 1-2 years whether to a) continue with an ongoing focus on NWS; b) broaden the focus to encompass all of NOAA and the broader environmental information enterprise; or c) work with DOC to establish a separate NOAA Partnerships federal advisory committee with a focus on either the NWS or the broader enterprise. The SAB accepted the PWG’s recommendation(s) in its entirety.

The EISWG will work closely with all five NOAA Line Offices (National Marine Fisheries Service – NMFS, National Ocean Service – NOS, Oceanic and Atmospheric Research – OAR,

National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service – NESDIS, and National Weather Service - NWS). As part of its work the EISWG will take into consideration the eight themes set forth by the NOAA SAB: 1) Quality, Creativity and Credibility; 2) Timeliness and Scale; 3) Science Connected to the Application and Operational Implementation of Policy; 4) Capacity Building; 5) Education and Outreach; 6) Efficiency; 7) Social Science Integration; and 8) Diversity.

The EISWG, in its role as a sanctioned working group of the NOAA SAB, will advise the SAB on the condition and capabilities of improving communications among the various public, private, and academic entities engaged in environmental information matters and will submit formal reports to the SAB that identify current issues, deficiencies, recommendations for remedial action, and proposed initiatives.

The EISWG is charged to: 1) provide advice on improving communication among the sectors, 2) provide advice on incorporating scientific and technical capabilities to enhance NOAA products and services, 3) provide a sounding board regarding implementation of NOAA's Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information, 4) evaluate NOAA effectiveness in responding to advice received from the EISWG, and the environmental information enterprise as a whole, and 5) evaluate after two years whether this working group is an effective mechanism for working with external partners or whether other mechanisms should be considered.

The EISWG shall be composed of 15-18 members, who, by reason of knowledge, experience or training, are especially qualified to represent users of NOAA environmental information services, including, but not limited to, the commercial weather industry (both value-added and end-users), academia, and the media. Membership may also include federal, state and regional government agencies and non-governmental agencies. The EISWG members will be appointed for three-year terms with the opportunity for one additional term. Initial appointments will include one-third each 3-year terms, one-third 2-year terms and one-third 1-year terms. The EISWG will provide suggestions of new candidates annually to the NOAA SAB for consideration.

As highlighted above in PWG's recommendation to the SAB, the initial approach of the EISWG will focus on interaction between the various entities above and NOAA's National Weather Service. As experience is gained with this approach, the EISWG may be expanded to include other NOAA elements.