



NWSEO Continues Support for a National Operational Water Support Center

NWSEO Vision - River Forecast Centers evolve into River Forecast AND Water Support Centers Nationwide

Developing Water Resources Services for the 21st Century

(January 13, 2011) Water - It's the life blood of the planet. It is a commodity that, even in some areas of our own country, is in diminishing supply. And now, the National Weather Service Hydrology Program is carving a path to develop and provide significant enhancements to hydrologic services.

NWSEO is working with the NWS on a national team that is evaluating the establishment of a National Water Support Center (WSC) and developing a future vision of River Forecast Center (RFC) operations. NWSEO Eastern Region Chairman and Senior Hydrometeorologist at the Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, David Solano and NWSEO member and Senior Hydrologist at the Southeast River Forecast Center, Paula Cognitore, have been serving on this team since July 2009. Representatives from OHD, OCWWS, NCEP and RFCs or Regional offices are also involved.

NOAA, NWS and NWSEO recognize the growing need for enhanced and broader range water resource services. The team charter states:

Water resources are widely considered to be one of the most significant challenges facing societies and governments in the 21st century. Managers and decision-makers in all sectors of water resources require new and more integrated information and services to adapt to uncertainty, climate and land use change and increasing demand on limited resources.

Water management is essential. Water supply and water resources impact every area of our lives, including: economic development, recreation, commerce, agriculture, hydropower, fisheries, navigation, irrigation, manufacturing, energy, municipal withdrawals and so much more. Water quality impacts: drinking water, groundwater, rivers, lakes, streams, estuaries, fish and wildlife habitat, ecosystems, and more.

The team focused on designing a hydrology program to meet the needs of the growing water resource community. By the summer of 2010, they began to critically assess the findings, discuss and agree upon the role of a WSC and how to capture the RFC field component into the WSC. Discussions also focused on the additional FTE's needed for the WSC and NWS field offices. NWSEO team members completed their section of the

draft report on the future operational components of the RFCs as they are transformed into “River Forecast and Water Resource Support Centers”.

The WSC will likely include staff from partner federal agencies (USGS, COE, FEMA), thereby encouraging the development of a better integrated water resources program for America. The WSC will be used to improve river forecasting among other things, while propelling RFCs into water resources. Staffing at the RFCs will likely need to be augmented by one or two additional people.

The vision is for the RFCs to become River Forecast and Water Resource Centers, producing the first generation operational water resources products from the Water Resources Prediction Suite. The RFCs will use WSC guidance for soil moisture, vegetation, snow states, etc., as input to local high resolution models to produce local/regional gridded forecasts of streamflow, water temperature, salinity, soil moisture, water quality, and other hydrometeorological variables. The RFCs will be using new decision support tools and operating new advance hydrologic models to provide expanded water resource products and hazard and economic decision support services.

Water is a growth area and this is a great opportunity for the NWS to expand into Water services. The creation of a national WSC along with the expanded water resources role in the 13 RFCs will be needed for the NWS to serve and meet the nation’s growing water needs. NWSEO will continue to advocate for our members in shaping the future NWS hydrologic program. For a copy of the powerpoint presentation developed by the workgroup and presented to RFCs HICs visit http://nwseo.org/member_news.php.

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