

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

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Revised February 2018

Background:

In 2012, the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB) confirmed the Environmental Information Services Working Group (EISWG) as a standing working group of the SAB. SAB charged EISWG to 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), in order 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, and 4) evaluate NOAA effectiveness in responding to advice received from the EISWG, and the environmental information enterprise as a whole. The EISWG also leverages the knowledge and expertise of the other SAB working groups as necessary.

In 2017 the President signed PL 115-25 into law. *The Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017* affirmed and authorized the EISWG as a standing working group of the SAB and assigned additional, specific charges to the working group.

Additional historical information about the origins of the EISWG can be found in an appendix to this document, Appendix One: Historical Overview of Environmental Information Services Working Group Evolution.

Charge:

- (1) to provide advice for prioritizing weather research initiatives at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to produce real improvement in weather forecasting;
- (2) to provide advice on existing or emerging technologies or techniques that can be found in private industry or the research community that could be incorporated into forecasting at the National Weather Service to improve forecasting skill;
- (3) to identify opportunities to improve communications (A) between weather forecasters, Federal, State, local, tribal, and other emergency management personnel, and the public; and (B) communications and partnerships among the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the private and academic sectors; and
- (4) to address such other matters as the Science Advisory

Membership:

In general, the Working Group shall be composed of leading experts and innovators from all relevant fields of science and engineering including atmospheric chemistry, atmospheric physics, remote sensing, meteorology, hydrology, social and behavioral sciences (including risk communication), electrical engineering, and computer sciences.

In carrying out its charge, the Working Group may organize into subpanels.

The Working Group shall be composed of no fewer than 15 members. Nominees for the Working Group may be forwarded by the Working Group for approval by the Science Advisory Board. Members of the Working Group may choose a chair (or co-chairs) from among their number with approval by the Science Advisory Board. EISWG members will be appointed for one three-year term renewable for one additional three-year term.

Reporting:

Not less frequently than once each year, the Working Group shall transmit to the Science Advisory Board, for submission to the Under Secretary, a report on progress made by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in adopting the Working Group's recommendations. The Science Advisory Board shall transmit this report to the Under Secretary. Within 30 days of receipt of such report, the Under Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives a copy of such report.

Appendix One: Historical Overview of Environmental Information Services Working Group Evolution

- 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 in the third year after the first meeting 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.
- In November 2009, the EISWG held its first meeting in Silver Spring Maryland. And through March 2013, the EISWG has held a total of eight formal meetings and one ad hoc meeting in addition to several teleconferences on special issues.

- In November 2012, EISWG presented to the SAB its assessment (as required by the initial charge to the EISWG) as to “whether this group is an effective mechanism for working with external partners or whether other mechanisms should be considered.” The SAB accepted the EISWG assessment that it has been an effective body and the recommendation that EISWG continue as a standing working group of the SAB. EISWG further recommended and the SAB accepted the recommendation that EISWG’s focus be broadened beyond an emphasis on the National Weather Service; this broadened focus is reflected in the following statement of Charge.