

# Environmental Information Services Working Group

of the NOAA Science Advisory Board

October 30, 2012

Mr. Raymond J. Ban  
Chair  
Science Advisory Board  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

*Subject: Future Status of the EISWG*

Dear Mr. Ban:

In keeping with its Terms of Reference (*Annex A*), the Environmental Information Services Working Group (EISWG) of the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB) is pleased to provide the SAB and NOAA leadership with its self-evaluation. As noted in the Terms of Reference, “*The EISWG is charged to...evaluate after two<sup>1</sup> years whether this working group is an effective mechanism for working with external partners or whether other mechanisms should be considered.*” The EISWG has been in existence for three years and its members have examined and discussed its effectiveness and whether it should continue as a standing working group of the SAB. We address these two points below.

## Effectiveness.

Over the three years of its existence, the EISWG has held seven formal meetings, one informal meeting, organized a session at the 2011 Summer Community Meeting of the American Meteorological Society (AMS), and given numerous briefings to various AMS committees and meetings (e.g. the annual partnership meetings of the National Weather Service) and other organizations. *Annex B* is a summary of the EISWG meetings, as well as the numerous activities undertaken by the EISWG. The latter includes such activities as formal reviews of the draft NOAA and NWS strategic plans, an ongoing review of the NOAA partnership policy, and the initiation, communication, and development of a prospectus for a new data and collaboration paradigm, “*Towards Open Weather and Climate Services.*” The EISWG members, in collaboration with the SAB and its Climate Working Group, helped to organize and subsequently helped to staff and co-chair the SAB’s Climate Partnerships Task Force. An EISWG member is also currently chairing on the SAB’s Satellite Task Force, which recently issued its draft final report.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently changed to three years.

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Given the informal responses received from NOAA, SAB members, and many leaders in the academic and private sectors, the EISWG believes it has been a very effective body in developing and communicating a wide range of environmental information service issues both within NOAA (especially the National Weather Service, as directed in our charge) and throughout the weather enterprise. While these are the EISWG's anecdotal observations, we have also talked with the Acting NWS Director, who states that from her perspective, EISWG has been highly instrumental in lowering a level of friction (that previously existed among NOAA and the academic and private sectors), encouraging open and collegial dialog that better supports NOAA, the NWS, and the weather and climate enterprise as a whole.

## Future Role.

The EISWG members have discussed on several occasions various options for the future status of the Working Group and the breadth of its future activities. The four options considered are:

1. Continue as a standing Working Group under the SAB;
2. Become a FACA committee directly advising the NWS;
3. Explore other mechanisms for providing input to the SAB and NOAA leadership (e.g. utilize NGOs such as National Research Council); and
4. Desist in all manners and forms.

After consideration and discussion, the members agreed that the EISWG should continue as a Working Group of the SAB. The rationale for this decision is that the EISWG has been extremely effective and efficient under its current structure. This structure allows the working group to be both nimble and responsive to NOAA, represent many of the views and positions of the weather enterprise, allow for attention to be given to topics identified by the EISWG, and to provide advice via the SAB to senior NOAA leadership including the Administrator. The EISWG members viewed a FACA committee structure as potentially far more limiting and cumbersome.

The EISWG also agreed that its charge should continue in the spirit of the Terms of Reference with an expansion of its focus beyond solely the National Weather Service. The EISWG members believe that if the Working Group is to be fully responsive to NOAA and examine a wide spectrum of topics related to environmental information at NOAA, then a view is needed that is broader than only the National Weather Service. We further believe that the EISWG provides NOAA a significant and unique contribution because of its cross-cutting focus and its ability to look at issues in depth. Moreover, the EISWG has already established excellent working relationships with other working groups of the SAB (e.g. Climate Working Group). It has examined issues both on the dry and wet sides of NOAA. Notwithstanding this need for taking a broader view, we also note that the EISWG expertise enables it to effectively address a wide range of atmospheric, oceanographic, observing system, and data management issues germane to environmental information services. At the same time, it is recognized that the EISWG is not well constituted to address issues pertaining to fisheries.

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In support of these positions, we also offer the following observations and recommendations:


- Although the SAB’s focus is “science,” the EISWG members hold that that definition most certainly includes issues pertaining to applications and operations;
- The EISWG would need to broaden the expertise of its membership in order to expand its focus beyond weather, a future EISWG work plan should include elements that are both NOAA-directed and EISWG-initiated, the latter being representative of bottoms-up input from the broader atmospheric community (e.g. as in “Open Weather and Climate Services”);
- In support of a broader focus, the EISWG should continue to support the needs of NOAA line offices beyond the National Weather Service, such as OAR, NOS and NESDIS—in particular in areas where there are key interfaces important to the success of the enterprise; and
- With an expanded role, there will be a concomitant need for broader operational and resource support at NOAA for the EISWG’s activities

We look forward to discussing the EISWG and its future scope and status at the November 15<sup>th</sup> morning session of the SAB meeting. In the interim, please let us know if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Nancy Colleton, EISWG Co-Chair  
President  
Institute for Global Environmental Strategies



Walter F. Dabberdt, PhD, EISWG Co-Chair  
Chief Science Officer  
Vaisala Group

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## Annex A EISWG's 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 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

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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<sup>2</sup> 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 4-year terms, one-third 3-year terms and one-third 2-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.

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<sup>2</sup> Subsequently changed to three years.

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## Annex B

### Summary of EISWG Activities

EISWG ACTIVITY	Improve Communication Among Sectors	Advise on Scientific and Technical Capabilities	Serve as Sounding Board for Partnership Policy	Assess NOAA's response to Advice	Evaluate EISWG Mechanism
<b>Convened EISWG Meetings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seven WG meetings</li> <li>One <i>ad hoc</i> meeting at AMS Summer Mtg., July, 2010</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Participated in SAB meetings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarasota, July 2010</li> <li>Ann Arbor, July 2011</li> <li>Telecon, September 2011</li> </ul>	✓	✓			
Participated in AMS Mtgs., 2010, 2011, 2012	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Reviewed and provided detailed response to draft reports and plans:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan</li> <li>NWS Strategic Plan</li> <li>SAB ConOps Report</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Engagement with other sectors (w/r/t NWS) and NOAA programs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Navy's Task Force Climate Change International—European Union and Embassy of Finland (Nov 2011 Mtg.)</li> <li>NESDIS, CWG, UCAR-NCEP, OAR, and IOOS presentations</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Developed Open Weather and Climate Services (OWCS) Concept</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted EISWG Wkshp at AMS Summer Community Mtg, August 2011, Boulder and August 2012, Norman</li> <li>Coordinated with DAARWG and CWG</li> <li>Briefed SAB (Nov. 29, 2011)</li> <li>Engaged NOAA/NWS leadership on next steps</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Assisted and Facilitated Climate Change Partnership Task Force</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terms of Reference and Identified Participants</li> <li>Reviewed Task Force Rpt.</li> <li>Finalized Report</li> <li>Prepared SAB Transmittal</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓		
Recommended EISWG Candidates	✓				
Conducted EISWG Assessment					✓