

New York Water Science Center, Strategic Science Plan, 2005-2010:

COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, AND SCIENCE SUPPORT

The USGS Mission is to “provide reliable scientific information.” Our ability to manage and communicate that information is critical to our success. We must continually evaluate and improve how we convey information and understanding. This evaluation requires asking our cooperators and stakeholders on some regular basis how we are doing and how we can do better.

In early 2005, the New York Water Science Center used a questionnaire and face-to-face meetings with many of our cooperators, as well as USGS employees, to get feedback on how the USGS can improve the way we communicate and the way we provide information and project results. This plan incorporates many of these suggestions.

The New York Water Science Center (WSC or Center) will position itself to be a partner in environmental science and water-resource management in the State.

“Communication works for those who work at it.”
(John Powell)

Communication

Programs, Plans, Goals, and Actions

The New York Water Science Center will:

- Hold regular, project-specific meetings with cooperators to help keep everyone attuned to project methodologies, what we are learning, problems we encounter, and overall status of the project.
- Distribute a periodic newsletter to provide cooperators, stakeholders, and the public with a regular reminder of the work the USGS is doing in New York State. This newsletter will highlight selected projects, provide a forum for discussion of changes in our monitoring networks, and advertise the availability of new reports.
- Increase USGS participation in scientific and resource management workgroups, committees, & professional societies. Through this participation, the USGS will become a partner in helping to address New York’s environmental and water-resource management issues.
- Enhance USGS participation in various seminar series (lunch & learns, symposia, Stony Brook, RPI, Queens College, Cornell, SUNY, etc.), to provide

Vision: The New York WSC maintains leadership in the scientific and water-resource community by:

- **Providing high quality, timely reports and information that are accessible (both easy to obtain and easy to understand) to cooperators and the public;**
- Staying current on advances in cutting-edge technologies, innovative science, and water-resource issues;
- **Being the first choice of cooperators, science educators, political representatives, and the public for information on environmental science and water-resource issues, methods, and data;**
- Providing data and results of the highest possible quality that meet a cooperator’s needs and exceed their expectations;
- Providing a healthy, safe work environment with opportunities for employee development and career advancement.

opportunities for technology transfer as well as colleague review and discussion of our programs.

- Hold internal WSC retreats and workshops to provide an opportunity for USGS staff in our various offices to interact in both a formal and informal environment. In addition to sharing technology and expertise, these workshops and retreats build better working relationships and facilitate more open communication.

Information Management

Programs, Plans, Goals, and Actions

- The New York Water Science Center will continue to put all reports on the web. The call for providing reports and information in electronic form was a common theme from the strategic planning questionnaire. In addition, traditional open-file and science-investigation reports do not always meet the cooperator’s needs. Many cooperators are requesting reports that are succinct, visually appealing, and directed towards non-technical audiences. The USGS will strive to provide these types of report products in addition to the more technical reports and peer-reviewed journal articles.

- Increasingly, the information the Center collects must be disseminated rapidly to meet the needs of cooperators, other government agencies, and the general public. The Center will continue to make improvements to our web interfaces and to evaluate and improve how cooperators and the public can access our information.
- The National Water Information System (NWIS) provides an outstanding tool to manage and present water monitoring data. The magnitude of information stored in NWIS sometimes makes it difficult to locate exactly what you are looking for. Because NWIS is a national application, enhancements are somewhat out of our control. That said, the Center will continue to work to influence NWIS development so that it will better address our customer's needs. For example, providing support for development of an interface to move data from NWIS to STORET. The WSC Information Officer – (518) 285-5602 or askny@usgs.gov – will also continue to provide assistance to anyone in using NWIS or in retrieving information from other sources.
- The geographic representation of information is an important component of all USGS programs. The New York WSC will continue to provide training in the use of geographic information systems (GIS). The Center will also maintain a core group of GIS experts to provide support to projects in interpretation and presentation of results.
- Safety is the number one priority for the WSC. Many of the jobs our employees perform have related hazards and safety concerns. The Center will continue to support a strong safety awareness program through safety training, job hazard analyses, strong safety communication programs, and collateral-duty safety officers in each office.

Science Support

Programs, Plans, Goals, and Actions

- Science Support comes in many forms, such as computer hardware and software, geospatial interpretive support, financial support, employee development, technology transfer, human and other resources, the list goes on and on. The New York WSC has an outstanding team of scientists, technicians, and other personnel. The Center will strive to support all aspects of their jobs so that they may provide outstanding, technically correct, and impartial science information to address our customer's needs.
- The New York WSC will stay on top of advances in information technology and provide the best tools our scientists and our cooperators need. As advances in technology occur we must evaluate their impact on our ability to serve our customer's information management needs and support upgrades where appropriate.
- The Center will continue to provide employee development opportunities including USGS training programs, college classes, on-the-job opportunities, mentoring, conferences, and symposia. As the science advances, it is critical to maintain a workforce that is at the cutting edge of these advances. Employee development is one key to successfully achieving our vision.



Figure 1. – Over-water safety training for field employees.

- Presentation of the science results is almost as important as the science itself – without the presentation, the science would never be seen. The New York WSC will continue to provide report, poster, and presentation production support for authors. The Publication Production Unit is an outstanding team of professionals that provide illustration, editing, layout, web-design, printing, and other support for Center authors.
- The time it takes to write, review, and produce a publication has improved significantly over recent years, but it still remains an issue. The New York WSC will strive to improve production times without impacting report quality.

These and other goals will help the USGS fulfill its vision. A brief description of all projects currently being conducted by the WSC can be found on the web at <http://ny.usgs.gov>. If you would like to provide additional suggestions for improvement, please contact: Rafael W. Rodriguez, Director, USGS New York Water Science Center, (518) 285-5659, email: dc_ny@usgs.gov