

Water Resources Discipline Information Technology Advisory Committee

ITAC CHARTER

INTRODUCTION

As a scientific organization the Water Resources Discipline relies upon computer technology for meeting all facets of its mission. Historically the Division has provided this technology through a combination of systems that were consistent throughout the Division and some task- or function-specific software or hardware. The explosion in computer technology provides greatly increased opportunities for computer-based solutions to scientific and management problems while also significantly increasing the complexity of the computer environment. As work continues to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau and its Disciplines, the Water Resources Discipline computer environment must be managed in order to maintain the needed consistency while allowing for growth and flexibility.

BACKGROUND

The Computer Policy Advisory Committee (CPAC) was renamed Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) in January, 2001, in order to emphasize its focus on the enhancements required for the water resources discipline excellence. The Computer Policy Advisory Committee (CPAC) replaced three committees: SPG, PIC, and SIT. The Strategic Planning Group (SPG) was formed in August 1988 to provide oversight and guidance to the National Water Information System-II software development effort. The Planning and Implementation Committee (PIC) was formed in November 1990 at the beginning of the Distributed Information System-II contract to help implement the new systems. The Software Implementation Team (SIT) was formed in January 1992 to provide for coordination of software development and to facilitate configuration conflicts.

A. Purpose of the Information Technology Advisory Committee

The purpose of the ITAC is to identify and address emerging IT issues, strategically plan and coordinate system configuration and implementation in WRD, and to represent and communicate with different parts of the organization, including WRD management and the Office of the Geographic Information Officer. ITAC is the WRD coordinating group to recommend decisions related to computer hardware and software

systems used by WRD, and evaluate for WRD Senior Staff and the GIO plans or policies that involve a significant expenditure of resources.

B. Authority

The Computer Policy Advisory Committee (CPAC), now renamed the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC), was created and was authorized by the Senior Staff and announced by the Chief Hydrologist, now Associate Director for Water, to all division, now discipline, employees April 4, 1995.

C. Functions

ITAC has comprehensive responsibility for providing guidance and direction in all matters relating to computer usage in Water Resources Discipline to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the computing environment. Specifically this responsibility will focus on resolving immediate problems as well as identifying long-term goals, including:

- o Strategic planning
- o Assess existing computer resources
- o Gather and provide accurate identification and specification of functional needs and requirements
- o Analyze economics of computing
- o Provide guidance on future investments on computing
- o Foster interoperability
- o Define a dynamic model for the WRD computer environment
- o Provide for configuration management with regard to water programs
- o Provide for components of Information Systems and development thereof.

D. Type of Organization

Standing committee of the U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Discipline.

E. Membership

Membership is a cross-section of the organization in terms of function, location, and authority. There are three organizations that have permanent membership on ITAC, Office of Information, Distributed Information Systems (DIS), and National Water Information System (NWIS). These organizations are represented by the Chiefs or their designees. Rotational members who represent District Chiefs, District Data Sections, District Administrative Officers, Regional Computer Specialists, District Section

Chiefs, District System Administrators, and District Database Administrators will be appointed by joint action of the Regional Hydrologists. Rotational members representing Water Discipline Technical Offices (including NAWQA), NWQL, World Wide Web, will be appointed by the chiefs of these groups or programs.

Members rotate at the start of the calendar year. Original members in rotational positions, or their substitutes, will serve from 1-3 years; new members will serve 3-year terms. Members who change positions within Water Discipline will be replaced on ITAC with a new representative of that group who will serve out their term. Members may be reappointed to another term.

It is expected that ITAC will create subcommittees to address specific subjects; members of ITAC may be asked to complete assigned tasks for these subcommittees after they have completed their term on ITAC. The Senior Staff will be briefed at regular intervals on the issues pertaining to computer hardware and software that affect Water Resources Discipline. ITAC Members areas follow:

- ** Senior Staff Liaison: Chief, Office of Information
- ** Chief, National Water Information System
- ** Chief, Distributed Information System Program Office (Bureau Liaison)
- * National Water Quality Laboratory
- * Water Discipline Technical Offices including NAWQA
- * District Chief
- * District Chief
- * World Wide Web
- * District Administrative Officer
- * District Data Chief
- * District Section Chief
- * District System Administrator
- * District Data Base Administrator
- * Regional Computer Specialist – Water Discipline
- * members that will rotate
members are permanent

NOTE -- Regional Hydrologists/Regional Executives removed two District Chiefs positions. Assistant Chief Hydrologist for Operations removed HIF representative. National Research Program removed active membership by NRP. Discipline Offices consolidated the NAWQA and Discipline Office representative.

The ITAC member names and their rotational status ending dates are listed at URL <http://www.nwis.er.usgs.gov/cpac/members.html>

F. Leadership

Chair and vice chair -- The Chair and Vice Chair serve a term of one year beginning in January, and can be re-elected for an additional 1-year term. The chair will be elected from a list of volunteers from the rotating members of the ITAC.

The Chair leads ITAC meetings. Chair is responsible for briefing new members on charter, sources of information, and pending actions. Chair solicits agenda items and distributes the final agenda prior to the meeting. Chair follows-up on action items.

The Vice-chair will also be elected at the first meeting after January 1. The Vice chair is to assist the Chair with normal duties and to facilitate meetings in the Chair's absence. If neither the Chair nor Vice Chair is able to attend a meeting, an alternate will be assigned by the Chair.

The person elected as the Vice Chair should hold tenure on the ITAC committee that extends beyond that of the Chair, so that upon departure of the Chair, the Vice Chair may be in a position to serve as Chair. Volunteers for the chair position should preferably be members who have served at least one year on ITAC.

Liaison -- Senior Staff members of ITAC are responsible for communication with Senior Staff. Chair or other members may be asked to assist by briefing Senior Staff as needed. Bureau Liaisons include the Water Discipline Information Specialist, Chief, Distributed Information System Program Office and the Chief, Branch of Administrative Management Systems. The Chief, OI will communicate with counterparts in the Bureau and the GIO through participation on the GIO Leadership Team. ITAC will delegate responsibility to members to act as liaisons to other Water Discipline standing committees, such as ICOM. To increase liaison with the GIO and across disciplines in the regions, the Regional GIO where ITAC is meeting will be invited to attend.

Executive Secretary -- The executive secretary assists the ITAC Chair by preparing and revising draft minutes and other records, maintaining files, and arranging meeting logistics and lodging.

Member -- All members are responsible for communicating with the group they represent – their constituency – by distributing to them draft agendas for suggestions, as a summary of the minutes of each meeting,

for their comment. Therefore it is important that every effort is made to attend meetings. Members are also responsible for chairing subcommittees, as needed. Staff outside ITAC may be asked to participate on subcommittees.

G. Operation

Meetings -- ITAC meets quarterly on a date and at a location decided by consensus of ITAC. A quorum of 70%, 13 members, is required to hold a meeting or for an absentee vote to be valid. Members must notify the chair at least one week in advance if they cannot attend, except in the case of an emergency. The meeting will be rescheduled if, one week prior to the meeting, it becomes apparent that at least 13 members cannot attend. If meeting attendance drops below 13 because of last minute emergency cancellations, the meeting will still take place and will be considered an official meeting.

Visitors are welcome, particularly from the host office. Notification of the chair of the intent to visit a meeting is appreciated. Visitors may not vote but may be asked to participate in discussions and, as a result, be reported in the minutes as appropriate. ITAC asks visitors to respect the privacy of some of the discussions.

Subcommittees may meet as decided by consensus of subcommittee. ITAC has agreed to follow a list of meeting rules in order to provide for a productive committee. The rules are listed at the following URL:

http://www.nwis.er.usgs.gov/cpac/docs/mtg_rules.html.

Decision-Making Process -- The ITAC have semi-annual meetings and monthly conference calls. Members have many other responsibilities and need organized documentation and clearly formulated background materials for the discussion and consideration of any proposed change in computer policy. This following text provides outlines for presentations to be made to the ITAC with the goal of improving decision making, as well as providing better justification of the decisions for other concerned parties. The supporting documentation for a presentation should be provided to the ITAC at least two weeks prior to the subject meeting.

Agenda items without timely and proper documentation are likely to be tabled by the Committee, although these stipulations may be suspended by vote during an emergency. The following discussion is separated into two parts: Recommendations for ITAC Proposals and recommendations for ITAC Business Analyses. The definitions for these terms are listed at the following URLs: **ITAC Proposals** and **ITAC Business Analyses**.

In general, a ITAC business analysis should contain the following elements:

1. **Statement of Need** -- (**See ITAC proposals**).

2. **Approach** -- Describe how the business analysis was conducted; who participated in preparing the analysis; what methods were used for gathering information and making the recommendation.
3. **Alternatives Considered:**
 - Enumerate all alternative actions considered, including the "no action" alternative. For each alternative, identify:

Description of the Action:

Briefly describe what would be done to meet the stated need.

Resources Required:

List money, hardware, software, FTE, contracts, training, support, etc. Include resources required from all concerned parties, as well as non-USGS. Identify assumptions made when estimating resource requirements.

Implementation Plan:

List the schedule with major milestones for the action. Identify training, acquisitions, completion of major components, testing, file conversions, and distribution as possible work elements. This section can be omitted for alternatives not seriously considered. State if some existing system is to be replaced or discontinued. Clearly identify dependencies in the plan on the actions of other groups.

Benefits and Limitations:

Describe how well the alternative meets the stated need, and how well the alternative integrates into the WRD computing environment. Discuss shortcomings of the alternative. Provide and summarize any data used to quantify benefits.

- **Recommendation:** (Optional, but preferred)

Select an alternative and justify the selection using information presented in the previous section. List options for obtaining the necessary resources to implement the selected alternative.

H. Revision of Charter

The Charter may be revised by consensus of the Committee at any time.