

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 440

June 18, 2002

MEMORANDUM

To: Chief, Office of Administrative Policy and Services

From: Robert M. Hirsch
Associate Director for Water

Subject: Transition Plan for BASIS+

As you are aware, there is considerable trepidation within the Water Resources Discipline and among the other discipline users of the Administrative Information System (AIS) regarding the loss of functionality that will occur in the transition to BASIS+. The Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC), formed to advise Water senior management on information technology issues, has summarized these concerns in the attached memorandum. They suggest that the Water Resources Discipline be allowed continued use of AIS through fiscal year (FY) 2003 until BASIS+ budget execution functionality is tested and proven in an operational environment.

I am sensitive to these concerns but offer the following recommendations in their place:

1. The entire Water Resources Discipline use BASIS+ for the submission of project budgets needed for the bureau planning process and as a central source for program information. In addition, science centers in any discipline that currently use AIS to meet requirements for budget execution and cost accounting for the reimbursable program be allowed to continue to use AIS for these purposes.
2. Selected Water Resources science centers (one per region and headquarters) use BASIS+ for budget execution and cost accounting in parallel with AIS throughout FY 2003 to evaluate its functionality for these purposes and make recommendations for enhancements of BASIS+.
3. A download process be developed to load the BASIS+ project budgets into AIS to avoid duplicate data entry. The Water Resources Discipline would provide personnel to develop this download to avoid diversion of BASIS+ staff from their planned activities.
4. A representative group of AIS users (chosen from the current AIS users across all of the disciplines) be convened to document ancillary functions that AIS currently performs that will not be performed by BASIS+ or FFS. This group would propose enterprise-level alternatives to provide for these functions in the future.

I believe that this course of action is necessary to ensure uninterrupted support of the reimbursable program and to avoid a proliferation of *ad hoc* systems to provide managers with functionality they need to do their jobs. I think it will contribute to the success of the BASIS+ project, by placing attention on the new functionality that BASIS+ will bring, rather than on the

loss of functionality that would come from the total shut-down of AIS at the beginning of the fiscal year. I look forward to discussing this plan with you.

Attachment

To: Carol Aten
Through: Bob Hirsch
From: Information Technology Advisory Committee, WRD
Date: May 22, 2002
Subject: Transition to BASIS+

Before we get to the primary content of this memo, I thought you would like some background on the author of the memo, the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC). As stated in its charter, "The purpose of the ITAC is to prepare strategic plans, coordinate system configuration and implementation, represent and communicate with different parts of the organization, make decisions related to computer hardware and software systems used by WRD, and make recommendations to the Senior Staff on plans or policies that involve a significant expenditure of resources." Attached are additional excerpts from the ITAC charter and a list of the organizational areas represented by our members. Additional information is available on the ITAC website, <http://wwwnwis.er.usgs.gov/cpac/>

First, we want to emphasize that ITAC fully supports the Bureau initiative to utilize a single project/financial management system for all organizational units. I think we all realize how beneficial it will be to have one system within the USGS for project and financial information. We do not want to do anything that would hinder progress toward that goal but want to do all we can to help achieve it.

ITAC is concerned, however, that as we move toward this goal, budget execution functionality may be lost in the interim as BASIS+ is released in steps. Of particular concern to ITAC is the proposed plan to turn off AIS on October 1, 2002. As a result, many field personnel will lose some of the management tools provided by AIS that do not yet exist in the interim versions of BASIS+ software. These will likely lead field sites to revert to other methods of obtaining the needed information and tools until they are available and proven in the common Bureau software. This can result in duplicative data-entry, numerous individuals developing spreadsheets and other patchwork software; therefore spending valuable science dollars to regain the budgeting and management tools they currently have available to them.

Some fairly major questions were raised at the May 14-16, 2002 ITAC meeting in Troy, New York regarding the potential loss of functionality through the imminent switch from AIS to BASIS+. Currently, 75 Water cost centers and 60 cost centers in the Director's Office, Geography, Biology, and Geology use AIS. Below are several examples of the critical capabilities provided by AIS that are still unproven in BASIS+:

- Budget-execution functionality and a wide variety of reports including up-to-date FFS funding and expense data, and aggregated budget/funding/expense scenarios. These data are required to ensure closing the accounts at each cost center. Project Chiefs

and Cost Center Chiefs are responsible for fiscal management and need a variety of reports to analyze and monitor expenditures.

- Ability to enter Funding data at the detailed level, as legally required for Cooperative Reimbursable Agreements.
- Linkage of Time-and-Attendance and Labor costs to financial reports. Labor is the single largest expenditure and is the one most closely monitored by project chiefs and cost-center chiefs to manage expenditures, review task performance, and plan workload distribution.
- Ability to enter and monitor budget execution by group of object classes (management category). This function is essential to our scientific project and program managers.
- Ability for cost centers to enter new employee information into a single bureau system and have that system populate other systems that utilize the same information, such as the directory and Lotus system. Valuable time will be lost if information has to be independently entered into more than one system.
- Ability to enter Planned Funding for out years of a project. Most projects funded by other agencies are multi-fiscal-year agreements, and out-year funding and/or different fiscal-year boundaries are a critical part of the planning process.
- Ability to access 30 years of historical Funding data and 10 years of historical Expense data. These data are essential for the planning process as well as providing background for audits, particularly by other Federal Agencies.
- Availability of automated assessment computation with policy equations, stored by Fiscal Year. Most funding agreements with other agencies are multi-fiscal year, thus the ability to track the evolving USGS assessment policy through the life cycle of these agreements will be required for audits as well as for maintaining the confidence of our cooperators.
- Automated Leave Allocation/Surcharge distribution, a Common Business Practice.
- Interdependency with other programs, such as the Reports Tracking System. These connections will be broken but need to be sustained to provide the fundamental information needed to populate information-product metadata at the outset of the report processing or we will need staff and time to go back and populate the metadata.

To alleviate these concerns, ITAC has a suggestion that will expedite the effective conversion to a single project /financial-management package within all Bureau cost centers. ITAC respectfully asks that AIS remain functional and connected to FFS until BASIS+ can provide budget execution functionality for our scientific community as well as our administrative community. Past experience with conversions to new financial systems has taught us the benefit of temporary side-by-side operation of the existing and new system. This approach has proven to expedite operations, testing, training, and acceptance of the new system as well. A transitional year will not reduce the motivation of project chiefs to convert to BASIS+, but will increase the likelihood that BASIS+ will be a fully operational system, that staff will be well trained and efficient in its use, that the ultimate goal of a single financial system within the Bureau is attained, and that this system will be accurate and meet all management needs.

We appreciate your consideration of these points and will be happy to discuss any of them with you or your staff.

Attachments:

- ITAC Charter
- ITAC Members

ATTACHMENTS

Water Resources Discipline Information Technology Advisory Committee ITAC CHARTER

Website: <http://www.nwis.er.usgs.gov/cpac/>

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.

ITAC Members areas follow:

- **Chief, National Water Information System
- **Chief, Distributed Information System Program Office (Bureau Liaison)
- **National Water Quality Laboratory
- *National Research Program
- *Water Discipline Technical Office
- *District Chief
- *District Chief
- *World Wide Web
- *National Water Quality Assessment Program
- **Senior Staff Liaison: Hydrologic Information Officer
- *District Administrative Officer
- *District Data Chief
- *District Section Chief
- *District System Administrator
- *District Data Base Administrator
- *Regional Discipline Information Specialist

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- *members that will rotate
 - **members are permanent