

USGS-WRD has a respected and well-deserved reputation for developing and maintaining IT-related support and resources in support of our scientific mission. Beginning in the 1980s, WRD implemented PRIME minicomputers at the District level to provide local NWIS installations. In doing this, a centralized IT support structure was implemented to direct and support these “field” installations. As the years passed, District-related IT capabilities increased as the computer resources evolved, and WRD’s IT-support infrastructure adapted. WRD assembled expertise in areas directly pertaining to our mission as well as areas in support of our mission. Examples include the Distributed Information Services (DIS) group, which provided direction and support of WRD’s computer hardware, software, network communications, IT-security, GIS, etc. The Administrative Information Services (AIS) group developed and maintains an MIS and financial package utilized by all of WRD and approximately fifty (50) non-WRD cost centers. WRD also implemented advisory committees, some technical in nature (i.e. Sun-TAC and NT-TAC), some administrative in nature, namely ITAC (formerly CPAC). Among WRD’s numerous successes, we have also encountered a few failures, most notably NWIS II. This failure was in one way a small success in that we were able to realize that we were not prepared for this implementation.

The point to be made is this – WRD has developed a highly functional IT support infrastructure. WRD has “pushed” to incorporate and support computing resources which enhance our mission-related capabilities. WRD’s ITAC, one of the catalysts in this infrastructure, has been struggling with its role in regard to the Bureau’s reorganization and the ramifications of some actions associated with the reorganization.

Several of the IT-related decisions regarding the reorganization are quite sound, including the migration of WRD’s WAN, security, and GIS support staff. These actions should benefit the Bureau’s mission in that these resources will remain available to WRD and will also be available to the entire Bureau. However, ITAC’s role is to serve as an advisory committee to WRD, and we would not be performing our function if we did not question some of the decisions and plans currently being considered for implementation at the Bureau level that could adversely affect WRD’s capabilities.

Most notable is the transition to the Bureau’s administrative package, FFS+Basis. WRD’s science program has a sizable amount of budget- and MIS-related information vested in AIS. We acknowledge the Bureau-related benefit of utilizing a single project-administrative package within the Bureau. There is a great deal of concern emanating from WRD cost centers regarding the potential inaccessibility of some of our current capabilities in support of our mission after the transition to FFS+Basis. To alleviate these concerns, ITAC respectfully asks that the ability for FFS to provide information to AIS be left operational after the transition to FFS+Basis, until the FFS+Basis package is capable of providing the same level of capabilities to WRD cost centers as currently afforded to WRD and associated users by AIS. WRD and these associated users would maintain the required information in FFS+Basis.

ITAC would also like to present an observation that we seem to be unable to address – which is the systematic (dismantling) of WRD’s IT support staff in order to support the Bureau’s (directives). As previously stated, WRD acknowledges the need to promote the Bureau’s mission, and while the other disciplines’ IT capabilities are expanding and moving forward due to the Bureau’s reorganization, WRD seems to be giving up some of the IT capabilities that were developed to support our needs.

One example of this include the reassignment of our lead WAN and security-related personnel. As previously stated, this is a logical implementation. These individuals are still available as resources to WRD as well as to the other disciplines; however, it makes little sense that WRD is faced with having to cover their salaries through FY03(?). Another example involves three WRD individuals who had a background in data/project archival who were reassigned to the Bureau level. That being done, WRD is now being faced with the Bureau directive to develop a data archival plan. WRD is questioning why we should be required to perform this task when WRD's support staff was reassigned?

In conclusion, it seems apparent that WRD had a superior IT-support infrastructure. The Bureau seems to be "tapping" a lot of WRD personnel to move the Bureau's reorganization along. The Bureau, and other disciplines, are moving forward with respect to IT-related capabilities, while WRD is relinquishing some of its "in-house" support infrastructure in support of the Bureau's reorganization. WRD respectfully requests that these observations be taken into consideration with regard to some of the Bureau's reorganization plans.