INTRODUCTION

Mr. Samuel P. Williamson
Federal Coordinator
Office of the Federal Coordinator for
Meteorological Services and Supporting Research

Welcome

After welcoming participants to the workshop, Mr. Williamson provided background information on the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology (OFCM). The mission of OFCM is as follows:

> *To ensure the effective use of federal meteorological resources by leading the systematic coordination of operational weather requirements and services, and supporting research, among the federal agencies.*

OFCM works through a suite of program councils, standing committees and working groups, and short-term joint action groups to facilitate cooperation among the agencies* that are involved in meteorological activities.

Moving on to the workshop, Mr. Williamson cited the two studies that resulted in the decision to conduct the Workshop on Strategy for Providing Atmospheric Information. First, the National Research Council, in its report entitled *The Atmospheric Sciences Entering the Twenty-First Century*, proposed the following initiative: "OFCM should lead a thorough examination of the issues that arise as the national system for providing atmospheric information becomes more distributed...and....develop a strategic plan." Secondly, during the same timeframe OFCM reached out to the federal meteorological community to identify their priorities for the coming century. One of the results of that initiative was the identification of the need for strategic planning in computing, communications, and information. In November 2001 the Federal Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research endorsed the plan to convene this workshop to begin addressing these issues.

The overarching goal for this workshop is to **provide a framework for developing a strategy leading to an optimal 21st Century national atmospheric information system.**

To achieve this goal, the following objectives will be pursued:

- Introduce and define the issue of providing atmospheric information in an evolving, decentralized national system.
- Consider atmospheric information issues in the context of a wide spectrum of meteorological disciplines or areas of application.

* Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Interior, State, and Transportation; EPA; FEMA; NASA; NRC; NSF; NTSB; OMB; and OSTP.

- Explore collection and distribution methodologies and related issues focused on making atmospheric information more universally available.
- Investigate the application of standards, formats, and other mechanisms as agents for making atmospheric information more universally useful.
- Proposed a coordination methodology for use in developing a strategy for providing atmospheric information.

In light of recent events, the workshop will be conducted within the context of two additional considerations:

- Environmental support requirements for Homeland Security, and
- Potential access and security constraints on operational information.

In closing, Mr. Williamson pointed out the need for interoperability with disciplines related to meteorology. It is likely that crosscutting issues will eventually drive the system for providing atmospheric information to evolve into a system for providing environmental information. Participants were encouraged to keep this broader perspective in mind during the course of the workshop.