



National Streamflow Information Program

Questions and Answers

Q: Under NSIP will all USGS streamgaging be funded strictly by appropriations to the USGS? What about the Cooperative Water Program and other Federal Agencies?

A: The Cooperative Water Program and other Federal agencies will still play a major role. Through their partnerships with the USGS, State and local cooperators will add to the network to increase the information content beyond what the Federal network will provide. Coop and OFA will be more cost-effective than they are today because NSIP would pay for the fixed cost of the network, so the per-streamgage costs they pay would decrease by about 40 percent.

Q: Is this plan only about streamflow and not water quality?

A: The NSIP plan is designed to improve monitoring of streamflow, although some NSIP streamgages will have precipitation, temperature, and water-quality sensors. An additional benefit of the planned NSIP network is that it provides a backbone for enhanced water-quality monitoring because meaningful water-quality monitoring requires flow information to determine constituent volume. Typically, 60 percent of the cost for monitoring water quality at streamgaging stations (with about 20 samples per year for a wide range of nutrients and major ions) is for streamgaging activities, and 40 percent for the water-quality sampling and analyses. The NSIP network will thus make a major contribution to water-quality monitoring by providing flow information at thousands of locations nationwide. The NSIP plan would also reduce the costs for streamgages which are not part of the Federal network, which would make water-quality sampling at these locations less costly as well. Finally, the information delivery system proposed for NSIP will provide for better delivery and archiving of water quality data as well as for streamflow data, and better regional estimates of flow characteristics will also be available from NSIP, which are needed for water-quality permits and TMDLs.

Q: Will all gaging in NSIP be done by USGS?

A: No, just as is the case now, some States and other Federal agencies have gaging programs and provide data to USGS data bases. USGS accepts their data after putting the data through an accepted quality assurance process. The USGS would provide funds to those agencies to bring their gages up to full NSIP standards.

Q: Who is the USGS working with in developing NSIP plans?

A: There is ongoing discussion of these plans by the Streamgaging Task Force of the Federal Advisory Committee on Water Information. The USGS also works closely with the Interstate Council on Water Policy, the Western States Water Council, and other water-related organizations. The USGS will also be seeking formal review of NSIP from the National Research Council in FY 2001. Finally, many States are forming State Water Monitoring Councils. The USGS will seek every opportunity to work with those councils.

Q: Recreational safety does not appear as an NSIP goal. Will NSIP serve the recreation community?

A: Although recreation safety is not one of the five Federal interests of NSIP, many of the streamgages identified are very important to the recreational boating community. The funding stability that NSIP will provide would forestall continued loss of gages vital to the recreational community. Also, because the USGS will cover fixed costs, the funding of new sites that are important for recreation will be more affordable for other Federal, State or local agencies.

Q: How can I comment on the NSIP plans or keep track of what is happening to the design and implementation?

A: Go to the web site <http://water.usgs.gov/nsip> or contact, Assistant Chief OSW, J. Michael Norris at mnorris@usgs.gov.

What would full implementation of NSIP cost and what has been expended thus far and in fiscal year 2002?

	Expenditures				Full NSIP Implementation	
	FY 99 \$M	FY 00 \$M	FY 01 \$M	FY 02 Estimate \$M	Capital Costs \$M (FY 2000 dollars)	Annual Costs \$M/year (FY 2000 dollars)
Capital Costs						
Federal Network		1.2	3.4	0.0	56	
Data Delivery Enhancements		0.2	1.5	0.0	8	
Total Capital Costs		1.4	4.9	0.0	64	
Annual Costs						
Network Fixed Costs (entire USGS network)			0.8	0.8		37
Station O & M (base Federal network only)	4.6	4.3	7.8	7.8		28
Floods and Droughts		0.3	0.4	0.4		4
Regional Analyses						4
Research and Development		0.2	1.0	0.9		5
Total Annual Costs	4.6	4.8	10.0	9.9		78
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	4.6	6.2	14.9	9.9	64	78