

DRAFT: The Future of Section 406 Integrated Water Quality Program Approaches and Funding

The ECOP/ESCOP Section 406 Task Force recommended that USDA-NIFA continue supporting the highly successful work of the National Integrated Water Program. Given the significant funding pressures the Task Force recommended that the current budget lines for the Integrated Activities (within NIFA's budget) be consolidated as a single funding line within Extension Activities [Smith Lever Section 3(d)]. *ADDITIONAL NOTE: Funding trends for Section 406 Integrated Water Quality have decreased considerably in the past three years: FY10=\$12.6M; FY11=\$8.9M; FY12=\$4.5M. These funds are proposed for \$0 in FY14.*

Since the Task Force's Final Report (June 2011) the nation's CES Water Leadership have developed the following more detailed recommendations that would implement the goals of the 2011 Task Force report. The following recommendations are offered by the Land Grant University representatives who have been serving on the National Integrated Water Program's Committee for Shared Leadership.

- I. The new National Water Program would focus on select national issues with local relevance, and it would be delivered by a national network of Land Grant University expertise -- within CES and AES.
- II. National priority issues would be identified through a collaborative process between NIFA and ECOP/ESCOP. Any particular national issue should be aligned with the Farm Bill cycle, thus allowing for additional prioritization of funding for emerging/changing needs in association with current or new issue priorities.
- III. Federal funding for this new program initially would be the \$4.5M from the Section 406 Integrated Activities Water Quality Program, with expectations for the funding to grow as water issues elevate nationally and the program demonstrates capacity to meet national needs for water research, education and extension-outreach.
- IV. Federal funding for this new program would be allocated on a regional basis with an opportunity for each state to participate through a competitive process. This competitive process would emphasize multi-state, multi-institution and integrated plans-of-work/proposals. This process would be similar to the current mechanisms used by Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs), and in their relationship to NIFA. Other examples include the Regional Integrated Pest Management Centers.
- V. The funding would be limited to 1862, 1890 and 1994 Land Grants Institutions (NOTE: there is no intent to change current eligibility of Section 406 water quality funds).
NOTE: The Section 406 Task Force recommended that funding for this initiative be established as a budget line/initiative within the current Smith-Level 3(d) section of the NIFA budget. Furthermore, the President's FY14 NIFA Budget proposes a substantial increase to AFRI. And, the accompanying Explanatory Notes describe how the agency might focus AFRI's competitive grants within a water challenge area. If that were to occur, the regional center approach described here would be very complementary, even adding to the effectiveness for how AFRI supports integrated projects and teams -- because these centers could expand and coordinate existing networks of expertise among the Land Grant Institutions. Regional Centers and linkages to state water (quality/quantity) coordinators are essential core capacity that competitive programs within AFRI mobilize when addressing important national issues. Regional centers and an AFRI challenge area for water should be considered as the "both and" approach to supporting capacity and competitive funding within NIFA.
- VI. The new National Water Program will be designed so that the following program characteristics would be achieved;
 - Utilize capacity of the Land Grant Institutions and their partners to address local needs.
 - Enhance our "capacity" expertise (not supplant it).
 - Integrate Extension, Experiment Stations and Educational/Instruction missions of the Land Grant Universities.
 - Ensure local impact through regional collaboration with national coordination across the regions.
 - Shared leadership model for decision making on priorities and funding.
 - Sustainability and increased competitiveness for securing external sources of program funding.

VII. General - structural elements of the new National Water Program:

- A. **Regional Water Centers** (base support for four centers (perhaps more), would be awarded competitively in a process similar to RRDCs). Regional Water Centers would include a minimum of a regional coordinator and evaluation support (percentage appointments to be determined by a regional proposal). The centers must show a commitment to program delivery, leadership on water issues, and multistate communication and priority setting, documentation of impacts, and communicating return on investment. In some regions, the host-institution for a regional center may offer a significant leveraged/match. [Base funding from current Section 406, Integrated Activities.]
- B. **Integrated Water Resource Management Grants [IWRMGs]**. To support state and multi-state responses this competitive grant program would be coordinated nationally by (e.g., Water Resource Coordinating Council – described below) and managed by the Regional Centers. [Base funding from current Section 406, Integrated Activities.]
- C. **State coordination of water resources management programming**. Participating states would identify a minimum of 50%-time for a Water Quality/Quantity Program Coordinator (WQC, would be a position identified and supported by both AES and/or CES, similar to the current designation of “State Water Quality Coordinator”). The state water coordinator/lead would participate as a member of an integrated team that competes for Integrated Water Resources Management Grants (B-above). State coordinators should be strongly encouraged to be included with competitive proposals as project directors or minimally as collaborators on proposals. Also proposals should clearly support the locally-identified (state and/or multi state) priorities of a Land Grant Institution.
- D. **Regional Multi-state Research/Extension/Development/Coordination Committees** can offer significant coordination and leverage among Land Grant Institutions. Such committees are encouraged, and should be components to the multi-issues oriented (task force like) expertise teams that the competitive IWRMGs (B-above) support within and across regions. Furthermore, Regional Centers would be strongly encouraged to support and link to these committees, even co-sponsor them.
- E. **Shared Leadership** – through a Water Resource Coordinating Council appointed by ECOP and ESCOP. Creating an environment for “shared leadership and decision making” about national program priorities and funding is very important to maintaining coordination among the Regional Water Centers, across state water programming efforts and state coordinators, and with NIFA-NPLs. This council would include all center directors, and a representative number (to be determined) of state water (quality/quantity) coordinators. The NIFA-NPL (or NPLs) would be part of the council as advisors (not official voting members due to federal advisory committee rules). Stakeholder groups would be added as non-voting advisors where national issues support such representation.

The above implementation concepts are based on the work of the Section 406 Task Force, AND they reflect many ideas found in the 2013 recommendations from the ESCOP/ECOP Working Group on Integrated Pest Management, as well as the changing fiscal environment which has become even more restrictive since the Section 406 Task Force concluded its work.