

Terms of Reference for GEO AquaWatch Steering Committee (December 12, 2024)

GEO AquaWatch Mission

The mission of the AquaWatch Initiative is to improve the coordination, delivery and utilization of water quality information for the benefit of society.

GEO AquaWatch Goal and Objectives

The goal of the AquaWatch Initiative is to develop and build the global capacity and utility of Earth Observation-derived water quality data, products and information to support effective monitoring, management and decision making.

The objectives to achieve this goal are:

Objective 1: Facilitate effective partnerships between the producers, providers and users of water quality data, products and information.

Objective 2: Improve analysis and integration of in situ and remote sensing water quality data.

Objective 3: Develop and deliver fit-for-purpose water quality products and information services.

Objective 4: Support technology transfer and access to water quality data products and information.

Objective 5: Advocate for increased education and capacity for the use of water quality information for decision making.

The GEO AquaWatch Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) has overall responsibility for oversight and stewardship of the GEO AquaWatch Initiative. The Steering Committee is the main governance body responsible for advising GEO AquaWatch in three areas:

1. Strategic direction – the development of strategic direction and the funding that supports it
2. Priority areas and topics –recommending new priority areas, including suggested actions to be taken to address priorities
3. Policy – supporting GEO AquaWatch Secretariat through recommendations on current policy and policy development in all areas of activity

More specifically,

- To represent water quality data and information provider and user interests and work with the GEO AquaWatch’s Secretariat and the GEO Secretariat to identify new providers and users, and patrons that would contribute to and benefit from GEO AquaWatch;

- To promote the aims and objectives of GEO AquaWatch and promote their activities, including the Water Quality Information Service. The SC shall be responsible for recommending any future modifications or updates of GEO AquaWatch mission, goals, or objectives
- To provide meaningful guidance and support to GEO AquaWatch working groups and actively engage in constructive input and monitoring their progress. Facilitate and coordinate relevant activities and resources when opportunities arise, in concert with the Management Team (such as taking an opportunity to briefly introduce an audience to GEO AquaWatch Activities via an oral or poster presentation or distribution of informational materials)
- To review and endorse updates to Implementation Plan and Annual Work Plans of GEO AquaWatch
- To provide leadership and guidance in securing funding and allocating budget to implement GEO AquaWatch priorities.
- Be an ambassador to GEO AquaWatch by making introductions and foster opportunities for collaboration between data and information providers and users, and patrons.
- To encourage and seek the active participation of the public and private sectors and of academia with interest in GEO AquaWatch mission by identifying and recruiting qualified representatives from these sectors to be new members of, or to fill vacancies on, the SC and to actively participate in Working Groups.
- To attend at least 2 out of 4 Steering Committee meetings in real time (via teleconference or in person) annually, and to listen to recordings of any missed SC meetings prior to the next meeting.
- The Steering Committee Chair (or Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair) shall sign all agreements (Memorandum of Understanding, Letter of Support, Fiscal Sponsorship Point of Contact, etc.) on behalf of GEO AquaWatch if a majority of the Steering Committee approves of signing the agreement for the Initiative.

Steering Committee Governance Structure

The Steering Committee will, as far as possible, operate by consensus. Decisions requiring a vote will be decided by simple majority of the votes cast. The quorum for a valid vote is participation of one half of the voting members of the Steering Committee present at the meeting. Votes may be held at meetings or by appropriate electronic means. These procedures will apply, for example, to make any changes to the Terms of Reference. The Steering Committee will meet via teleconference on a quarterly basis.

The Steering Committee will consist of the representatives of the community data and information providers and users, working group representatives, and patrons. Patrons, as defined here, are those organizations that contribute resources for the overall coordination of AquaWatch (e.g. Secretariat, publications, Symposia, etc.) and/or the production of new services. It is anticipated that between one third and half of the Steering Committee will consist of representatives of user communities.

Steering Committee members will be elected by the existing SC, from nominations received following an open call. Nominations can be made by the SC, data and information provider and user organizations, or members of the community. Self-nominations will be welcome. In their decision, existing Steering Committee members will take into account the contributions of the organizations being represented, the relevance of the organizations being represented, the balance between “providers” and “users”, geographical representation and gender balance.

Steering Committee members will serve a 4-year term with the potential for a one-year extension (not to exceed 5 years in total). The term may be shortened to two or three years, for example if a member is serving as a representative of another organization, to align with the term they will serve as official representative (e.g. Chair or Executive Committee member) of that organization. Chair, Vice-chair and Ex-officio Advisor officers will be elected by the Steering Committee members. Officers will serve terms of two years (not to exceed 2 years in total in each office). Specific duties are available upon request.