



**2020 Federal Partners Meeting**  
**Monday, November 16, 2020**  
**1-2pm**  
**Zoom**

**Present:** Aileen Anderson (USDA-NRCS), Anthony Bobo (BLM), Eric Davidson (UMCES-AL/Host), Jerry Elian (USFS), Dan Filer (NPS/CHWA CESU Research Coordinator), Tom Fish (NPS/National CESU Coordinator), Liz Galli-Noble (DOD), Paul Knorr (BOEM), Genevieve LaRouche (USFWS), Michael Liddel (NOAA), Jonathan Lilley (BOEM), Tom O’Connell (USGS), Chris Petersen (DOD), Rhonda Schwinabart (UMCES-AL/Host), Anne Timm (USFS), Perry Wheelock (NPS), Sherry Whitaker (USACE), Anna-Marie York (USFWS)

**Meeting called to order at 1pm.**

Meeting opened with welcome from Dan Filer and introductions by all present.

**Overview of the Survey distributed for the 2021 CESU Renewal/Project Data – Rhonda Schwinabart (Coordinator of Outreach, UMCES-AL)**

- CHWA CESU is up for renewal in 2021. Host is currently conducting surveys with partners related to questions posed in renewal guidance. Requesting federal partners review data on projects funded through each agency. Additionally, need to confirm contacts and signatories.
- Reviewed the Google Form survey for federal partners, as well as the renewal website that includes links to reports and contacts for agency review.
- Original memo was sent to federal and research partners on 11/5 and completion is requested by 12/4, although given current circumstances there is some flexibility. Calendar invitations with due dates have been sent and a reminder email will go out later this week. Self-assessment is due to National Office by end of January.
- Data is available for review at <https://chwacesu.org/chwa-cesu-2021-renewal/>
  - Filer noted that he has not received all FY20 project data from all partners, so not all data for those agencies is represented in the posted reports. Reports are current as of data received by 11/2. Filer still working on getting all data and reports will be revised once data is received.
  - For any projects not listed, Filer will be following up to obtain copies of agreements.

**Role of Federal Partners in the Renewal – Tom Fish (National CESU Coordinator, NPS)**

- Tom Fish sent email with guidance and cover letter to federal partners on 10/1. Guidance is also available at [http://www.cesu.psu.edu/materials/CESU\\_Renewal\\_Guidance\\_2021.pdf](http://www.cesu.psu.edu/materials/CESU_Renewal_Guidance_2021.pdf).
- Agency representatives of the federal partners in the CHWA CESU serve as the “Federal Managers” for the renewal process.
- In addition to the data validation needed for the host’s self-assessment, managers are also engaged in two other aspects of the renewal that take place following submission of the self-assessment report:
  1. Recruit external reviewers for independent review of CHEWA CESU.
  2. Produce Federal Managers committee review and recommendation report.
    - a. Identify 2 federal managers to serve as co-chairs.
    - b. Organize calls to discuss and then give feedback on reports.
- Timeline
  - Self-assessment report is due in late January
  - Federal Managers will then have 30 days to submit report; managers’ work takes place concurrently with external reviewers.
  - Once reports are submitted, National CESU Office compiles materials and distributes to Interagency Council for review. Council meetings in late spring to decide on renewal.
  - Once Council approves, National CESU Office works with host to create new agreement and obtain needed signatures. Goal is to ensure new agreement starts seamlessly at completion of expiring agreement.

- Filer has already had some conversations with candidates for external reviewers and will be reaching out to Federal Managers to identify leads. Federal Manager meeting will most likely take place in February.
- CHWA CESU is doing well and is very well organized, so no concerns related to renewal process at this time.

**Report on Federal Partner dues submissions – Tom Fish (National CESU Coordinator, NPS)**

- In 1999, federal partners were required to provide a one-time payment of \$10,000 to each CESU host institution to cover costs of hosting. New funds only came when a new federal partner was admitted.
- In 2014, 12 federal agencies agreed to pay \$1800 annually to each CESU in which they were a partner. Two additional federal agencies abstained. Funding began in FY15. This is not a legal requirement for agencies but it is described as an expectation based on their prior agreement.
- Money is transferred from agencies to NPS National CESU Office and then to the hosts through funded modifications. Delivery of funds from agencies to has only been around 30%. Some agencies, like NPS, have supplied supplemental funding to hosts to assist with needs. Issues are across the board, in that agencies are not providing funds to any of the CESUs to which they belong.
- There has also been an issue with hosts being able to spend down allocated funds. Drawdowns serve as a trigger for the allocation of new funds for some agencies.
- While there has been some discussion of removing agencies for non-payment, the current consensus is that the millions of dollars in project funds these agencies allocate through the CESU outweighs host support funding issues.
- Stressed that CHWA CESU and National Office recognize that those on the call may be unaware of these issues as agreements were made at the headquarters level but hope that CHWA CESU Federal Managers can assist with taking the issue back to their leadership.
- Those agencies in the CHWA CESU not providing funding in FY19 or FY20 include the following:
  - BIA
  - BLM
  - FWS
  - USGS
  - USACE- funds were received too late for FY20, so funds will be allocated in FY21.
  - NOAA
  - NRCS
  - NASA (new partner, so not expected to provide funding until next year)
  - Forest Service- one of initial partners who abstained due to interpretation of their statutory authority for 0% indirect cost rate for land-grant institutions.
- Eric Davidson stressed that these funds are used to pay host support staff dedicated to CESU activities and initiatives. It is a challenge to budget when host institutions don't know when or how much funds will arrive.

**Feedback from Annual Meeting Panel Discussion – Eric Davidson (Host Director of the Chesapeake Watershed CESU Network, UMCES-AL)**

- Part of the meeting was used to express our appreciation to Perry Wheelock for support and guidance over the years. With her retirement this year, the 2020 meeting will be her last.
- Presented on the Experts Database and discussed proposed new projects database, which when launched, will greatly aid future renewals through improved real-time data tracking. Would be happy to set up a special meeting for new agency representatives on the Experts Database, which can be accessed at [https://chwacesu.org/experts\\_database/](https://chwacesu.org/experts_database/).
- Presented overview of renewal process for research partners and overview of responsibilities of technical and administrative partners.
- In lieu of the usual scientific talks, attendees engaged in a panel discussion related to inclusion. Recordings are posted at <https://chwacesu.org/meetings-3/>. Partners asked host to convene some meetings to further explore internships and other collaborative ideas posed during discussion.

No further comments or questions were posed.

Meeting adjourned at 2pm.