



THE WEATHER
COALITION

September 20, 2005

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Brigadier General David L. Johnson,
Assistant Administrator for Weather Services
National Weather Service
Partnership Policy, Room 11426
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1325 East-West Highway,
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283

Dear General Johnson:

As the co-chairs of the Weather Coalition, we write to offer our comments on the proposed clarification to NOAA's "Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information" published in the Federal Register on August 4, 2005. The Weather Coalition is a diverse group of representatives from industry, academia, science and education consortia and a national laboratory (see attached membership list). We are committed to working together to improve the capabilities of the country's weather prediction and warning capabilities.

In general, the Coalition supports this policy, and applauds NOAA's spirit of working with the external community. The Weather Coalition appreciates that NOAA is committed to open consultation with all who are affected by NOAA's services including the private sector. We note that NOAA has said it will use a variety of mechanisms to consult openly on these matters as it moves forward. Section 5.c. of the policy states that NOAA will "[seek] advice on specific matters of concern in accord with the Federal Advisory Committee Act." The Coalition believes that meaningful consultation is important for all of NOAA's activities – especially those of the National Weather Service (NWS). As a result, the Weather Coalition believes strongly that, consistent with NOAA's newly revised partnership policy, the NWS should establish a federally chartered advisory committee. Such an advisory committee would assist the NWS in strengthening coordination and cooperation with the public and private sector.

Such a committee was recommended in the National Academy of Sciences' report entitled, *Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services (2003)*. The *Fair Weather* report concluded that the rapid changes in science and technology underlying weather and climate forecasting are likely to continue. "Therefore, the committee's primary conclusion is that it is counterproductive and diversionary to establish detailed and rigid boundaries for each sector outlining who can do what and with which tools. Instead, efforts should focus on improving the processes by which the public and private providers of weather services interact."

% Cynthia Schmidt
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The report goes on to recommend:

The NWS should establish an independent advisory committee to provide ongoing advice to it on weather and climate matters. The committee should be composed of users of weather and climate data and representatives of the public, private, and academic sectors, and it should consider issues relevant to each sector as well as to the set of players as a group, such as (but not limited to):

- *improving communication among the sectors,*
- *creating or discontinuing products,*
- *enhancing scientific and technical capabilities that support the NWS mission,*
- *improving data quality and timeliness, and*
- *disseminating data and information.*

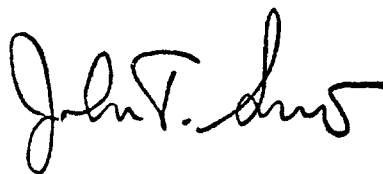
The various scientific venues (such as the new Commission on the Weather and Climate Enterprise established by the American Meteorological Society), NWS-sponsored user meetings, and the occasional forum on the public-private partnership are valuable and should be continued as part of the process for improving communication among the sectors. However, a federally chartered advisory committee would operate *within* the NWS policy-making process. This would allow for meaningful public-private coordination and cooperation with respect to the weather enterprise. The committee could help to coordinate federal and nongovernmental efforts in weather data gathering and dissemination with optimal efficiency. In turn, this would serve to reduce the current tensions between the external community and the agency, eventually leading to a more supportive NWS constituency. The end result will be a stronger and more effective NWS.

The Coalition reiterates its support for the proposed policy and appreciates the opportunity to provide comments. We hope you will consider our recommendations as you move forward in implementing the policy.

Sincerely,



Ray J. Ban
Executive Vice President
The Weather Channel



John T. Snow
Director, Oklahoma Weather Center
and Dean, College of Geosciences at
The University of Oklahoma