

VISIONS AND GOALS FOR THE AMS POLICY PROGRAM

The scientific community faces two major challenges that the Policy Program seeks to address. The first is to help policy choices take full advantage of information and services relating to weather, water, and climate. The second is to make sure policy makers understand how much the broader society's welfare depends on information and services relating to weather, water, and climate.

Meeting these two challenges will help ensure that the scientific community receives the support and resources it needs to make critical information and services available and, most importantly, will help the nation, and the world, avoid risks and realize opportunities related to the Earth system.

The Policy Program uses three primary approaches to help meet these challenges.

- We develop capacity within the scientific community for effective and constructive engagement with policy makers. We do this by training Earth scientists with respect to the federal policy process and by providing hands-on opportunities for members of our community to work with policy makers, most notably through our intensive Summer Policy Colloquium.

Through these efforts, we are building an army of ambassadors within our community who engage with the policy community. The strength of this distributed approach to policy engagement is that small contributions of time and energy from many individual experts can aggregate into a huge impact on the policy process overall.

- We inform policymakers directly on established scientific understanding and the latest policy-relevant research. As one example, our Capitol Hill briefing series allows policymakers to hear from the leading experts in our community directly on topics that are critically important for the nation's welfare. Through these briefings, we have created a pipeline for the flow of information from the AMS community to decision makers, which provides them with access to the best available scientific understanding.

- We help expand the knowledge base needed for incorporating scientific understanding into the policy process. We conduct studies to better understand the role of weather, water, and climate in key sectors of the nation's economy. We analyze policy choices and budget priorities to reveal the impact that policy decision making has on our community's capacity to provide weather, water, and climate information and services to the larger society. We develop new policy options to help manage societal risks associated with the Earth system and to create new opportunities for societal advancement.

Over the past several months, we have defined a core set of activities for the Policy Program that would consist each year of one Summer Policy Colloquium, four major studies, and eight Hill briefings. We have a way to go to make this ambitious plan a reality, but this core would constitute a meaningful initial implementation of our vision that we can sustainably build on over the next several years into major advances at the interface of science and policy.

We will compliment this core with a broader range of activities that can contribute to our goals. Most notably, we expect the Congressional Science Fellowship, Congressional Visits Days, budget and policy analysis, and outreach efforts to continue to make significant contributions in the years ahead. We will also continue to look for new opportunities to help develop the capacity of the scientific community to engage the policy process, to directly inform policymakers, and to expand the knowledge base at the interface of science and policy.

Policy choices have the greatest chance to benefit society when grounded in the best available knowledge and understanding. Through our activities, the AMS Policy Program advances societal decision making with respect to weather, water, and climate. This helps policymakers recognize and manage Earth system risks and take advantage of emerging opportunities our science makes possible.

—PAUL HIGGINS, AMS POLICY PROGRAM DIRECTOR