



## **Request for Nominations for Water Portal Developers Workshop**

To: All LAC IHP National Committees  
All IWRN Focal Points  
All GEF International Waters projects

August 21, 2002

From: Secretary, UNESCO-IHP  
Co-chair, IWRN Advisory Council  
International Waters Advisor, UNDP-GEF

We invite you and your partners to help build our collective water resource management knowledge and capacity: Join UNESCO, the OAS/IWRN, the Global Environment Facility's IW:LEARN, and the WaterWeb Consortium in developing a world-wide network of interconnected regional "water portals." A water portal is a dynamic Web-based information management tool for water resources managers.

Through its own web site, each participating organization will host and share direct, organized access to water-related knowledge resources from its region and from around the world. Participants in the workshop will benefit from learning firsthand how to host interactive databases and dynamic content via the World-Wide Web. Finally, participants will become familiar with the global network of water organizations that exchange experiences and contribute to our collective knowledge base.

By August 30, 2002, those wishing to participate in the workshop should fill out the attached application form. You are encouraged to nominate a technical staff member or technical manager to attend the Fifth Water Information Summit (WIS-5) Water Portal Developers Workshop. The face-to-face portion of this training will occur October 20-22, 2002. This workshop will immediately precede WIS-5 (October 23-25, 2002) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA. Others interested in attending just the WIS-5 should register online at [www.waterweb.org](http://www.waterweb.org).

Background on the World Water Portal initiative, further details on WIS-5 and the workshop, and a workshop application form (including scholarship information) are attached below. We would appreciate your assistance in distributing this information to other water organizations in your region.

We look forward to receiving your application, to your participation in the workshop and summit.

Sincerely yours,



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## WORLD WATER PORTAL BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, as the World-Wide Web has matured, numerous Web sites emerged to provide information related to water management. More recently, the international waters community has created a number of distinct water portals, such as the WaterWeb Consortium's WaterWeb.org, the UNESCO Water Portal, and the Global Environment Facility's International Waters Resource Centre. Each of these water portals catalogues and facilitates discovery and access to a unique subset of useful resources for integrated water management. Through the World Water Portal initiative, the underlying structure of these and new regional portals will be restructured to meet common standards. This will allow resources collected for one portal to be discovered and accessed through the others.

Efforts to build a regional water portal prototype began at the Fourth Water Information Summit (WIS-4, October 2001). Since then, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, International Hydrological Programme, World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO/IHP/WWAP) the Foundation for Inter-American Dialogue on Water Management (FIDM), and the Florida Center for Environmental Studies (CES), all members of the WaterWeb Consortium and affiliated with the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN), have partnered to jointly establish and manage a "Water Portal of the Americas." This portal will enhance access among water resources communities and water stakeholders to credible, reliable, and practical data for sustainable and integrated water resources management in the Americas (North America, Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region).

UNESCO and the GEF International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN) also agreed to engage GEF and other partners in developing the Water Portal of the Americas Web site, which will serve as a model for developing a global network of intercompatible regional water portals, with collective knowledge shared across an integrated World Water Portal.

The WaterWeb Consortium, a group of water organizations whose aim is to promote use of the Internet to effectively disseminate and share water information and water management experiences, serves as the primary mechanism for implementing this initiative. In addition to training and capacity building in the use of Internet-based tools, the WaterWeb Consortium assists in developing Web sites that focus on water data and information and holds the annual Water Information Summits.

The WIS-5 Water Portal Developers' Workshop, led by IW:LEARN, includes follow-up support leading up to the Third World Water Forum (WWF-3) in Kyoto, Japan (March 2003). The WaterWeb Consortium and the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) will co-organize a Water Information Day at WWF-3. On this day, the conveners plan to showcase the Water Portal of the Americas and those Web sites which become fully operational within the 4 months following WIS-5. As a preparatory meeting for Water Information Day, WIS-5 will also be used as an opportunity to collectively address all aspects of collaborative cooperation in developing and launching the Water Portal of the Americas and integrated Web sites.

Organizations developing or hosting their own water Web sites are invited to participate in the Water Portal initiative and the WIS-5 meeting by contacting [wis5@ces.fau.edu](mailto:wis5@ces.fau.edu). Similarly, those organizations interested in presenting the water information contents of their Web sites at the WWF-3 as poster papers should contact [awrahq@awra.org](mailto:awrahq@awra.org).

## **WIS-5 WATER PORTAL DEVELOPERS WORKSHOP**

The WIS-5 Water Portal Developers Workshop will be held October 20-22, 2002 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, USA. Any organization wishing to share water-related knowledge and information through its own website should nominate its web developers or their direct supervisors to attend this workshop.

At the workshop, participants will learn how to:

- Build/Customize an inter-compatible Web site and become familiar with 'good' web practices and standards.
- Customize templates to create dynamic Web content banded for their own website.
- Create a water knowledge database compatible with numerous websites around the world.
- Become familiar with emerging shared tools and standards for inter-compatibility
- Contribute to and benefit from the World Water Portal development process.

An orientation for the workshop will begin via email in late September 2002. In October, participants will bring their ideas and a small set of knowledge resources to the face-to-face workshop, where they will develop a working model of their organization's web site. Participants will also be encouraged to demonstrate their workshop products and contribute their insights at the subsequent WIS-5 meeting.

During the four months after the WIS-5 workshop, the IW:LEARN training team and fellow participants will provide virtual technical support, as needed, to assist one another in their respective web site implementation, including:

1. Hardware and software set-up and functionality
2. Database structure and population
3. Web site design, tools and services
4. Knowledge sharing and inter-compatibility across websites

This workshop brings participants into a virtual community-of-practice – composed of prior WIS web developers workshop trainees – which provides on-going peer-to-peer support and learning for trainees while applying their new skills to develop and implement their own water websites.

Organizations nominating participants for training in the WIS-5 Workshop are requested to demonstrate their commitment to the World Water Portal "Vision to Action" process (to be circulated to applicants) following WIS-5 and leading up to the WWF-3. WIS-5 participants will help to formulate and be asked to enter into a brief Vision to Action Agreement with UNESCO-WWAP, GEF-IW:LEARN and the WaterWeb Consortium. They will agree to develop local portal capacity, provide reliable Internet access, and contribute to the co-development of the regional portal. Assistance may include implementation of local Integrated Water Resource Management-related knowledge-sharing products, information and communications tools developed or translated into one or more UN languages, and the formulation of actions plans for collaborative development of regional Water Portals (e.g. the Americas, Africa, Asia, etc.). WIS-5 Vision to Action results will be showcased, and next steps proposed at the World Water Forum in March 2003.

The workshop organizers welcome participants from the LAC region, as well as other countries and GEF International Waters project regions. The cost of participating in both the Workshop and WIS-5 is \$845 USD. While sponsoring organizations are expected to provide for participants' transportation, subsistence, and registration fees, funds are being sought for limited scholarship support. Attached below is a registration and scholarship application form (with criteria for workshop participants and scholarships), along with a description of WIS-5.