
SCCWRP's New Website

In December 1996, SCCWRP entered the digital age with its first website. Since that time, we have had nearly two million page visits. Not only has this been a successful medium for sharing our data and publications, but it has also been a wonderful means for establishing new partnerships. Most every year we receive inquiries from fellow scientists who discovered our research on-line and contacted us about potential collaboration.

However, the evolution of our website has not kept pace with the growth of our organization. We have expanded our research areas and increased the number of interdisciplinary studies that transcend traditional departmental divisions, but finding these new research areas on our website has been challenging. When the SCCWRP Commission conducted a survey last year to assess the Agency's strengths and weaknesses, the website was one of the few areas identified as needing improvement (thanks to the 280 people who participated in the survey and for your many kind comments about our organization).

We responded by developing an enhanced website, which launched in October. The biggest change was incorporation of a new Research Areas section, which features overviews of our ongoing and significant past projects. Previously, you could learn about our research by reading our annual Research Plan or perusing our publications list. These methods offer some insight, but fail to provide context of previous projects in that area or describe potential significance to the management community. The new thematic organization provides descriptions of our longer-term research directions and explains how present projects build upon previous work toward those objectives.

The theme-based organization also provides a structure for presenting tools that result from our investigations. For example, SCCWRP recently collaborated with leading scientists in the field to select a preferred method for measuring fecal indicator bacteria in sand. The web page for that project contains not only the study results, but also detailed instructions and video clips describing how to perform the selected method. We are adding similar kinds of guidance and implementation tools from our other projects.

Several other new features have been added to the website, including a more frequently updated "News" section and improved search capabilities. Because a picture is worth a thousand words, we added a photo gallery and populated the Research Area pages with explanatory figures and images. Videos of our seminars are available for viewing on the website as well. Finally, a map-based data query interface that allows the user to preview data before downloading has been added, a marked improvement over our previous option of downloading flat files.

Achieving these changes involved a huge time investment, with nearly 450 pages added (and more improvements underway). However, communication is key to SCCWRP's success, as there is not much value in our research if it is difficult to find, understand or use. I hope you find the website improvements beneficial and worth the investment.



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