This Biennial Report summarizes the 2007–2008 achievements of the National Academies’ Water Science and Technology Board (WSTB). This report, which marks the 25-year anniversary of our board’s establishment, provides information on our current activities, future plans, and program operations.

Since publication of our last biennial report, the WSTB has issued nearly two dozen reports providing advice on a variety of water-related topics. These completed studies and our portfolio of ongoing studies reflect the breadth of water management challenges in the United States. A sample of the issues examined by our board in the 2007–08 period include water quality monitoring for the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico; plans for moving forward with restoration of the Everglades; prospects of desalination technologies to augment U.S. water supplies; how to cope with and adjust to drought and water shortages across the Colorado River basin; and the viability of storing water supplies in underground aquifers. These and the other projects we conducted during this period continue to illustrate the importance of sound, independent scientific advice in making good decisions about managing and protecting the nation’s water assets. They further illustrate WSTB’s important role in guiding the nation forward in dealing with the critical water issues of our time.

Since its establishment in 1982, WSTB has placed great emphasis in communicating its results to a broad audience. The board has produced an annual or biennial report regularly since its beginning. We also prepared a quarterly newsletter for many years until web-based information recently became a more practical approach to outreach (see the WSTB website at http://dels.nas.edu/wstb/). In recent years we have intensified communications efforts, first in 2005 with the creation of the Water Information Center (http://water.nationalacademies.org/), which allows exploration and search of over 100 reports by the Academies on water-related issues in the United States and abroad, and then in 2007 with the portal-based resource, Safe Drinking Water is Essential (http://drinking-water.org), which provides access to information about and solutions to water supply challenges around the world, mainly in developing countries. The challenge of expanding on and continuing these efforts lies ahead. In addition, the board, working with our parent Division on Earth and Life Studies, recently produced a booklet that provides an introduction to drinking water issues. It draws primarily from a body of reports prepared by the WSTB over the years and is aimed at heightening public awareness of our work and important water issues of our time. Information about the booklet (including directions for requesting hard copies) is available at http://dels.nas.edu/water/basics.shtml.

Within the U.S. federal government, water science issues are prominent on the policy agenda within all major administrative departments. The nation’s water-related problems and challenges have many dimensions, are persistent, and generally are increasing in severity and frequency across the country. These increasingly challenging problems are reflected in the diversity and ever growing volume of our range of projects.

We thank you for your interest in our program and hope you find this Biennial Report interesting and informative.