

## Unsolicited Comments on the "SOO TAP Recommendations for COMAP"

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Having just completed my three-year term on the COMET Advisory Panel and being a co-lead for the COMAP 2002 course, I felt compelled to write a few comments concerning the recent "SOO TAP Recommendations for COMAP" report. I hope that my comments are taken in the spirit intended, namely, to update the course to better reflect the needs of the SOOs in the new millennium.

I will do my best to keep my comments focused and short.

1. I think that a three-week course is too short to be the core COMAP course. In 2002 Matt Kelsch and I were able to reduce the course material to six weeks and saw several areas that could be shortened even further. However, four weeks would allow for two weeks of warm-season and two weeks of cold-season related topics. Also, if the course were four weeks long, then only three COMAP Symposia would be needed to be completed in two years. This is far more achievable.

2. COMAP is primarily a graduate-level science course in meteorology. It is **not** a course on how to use AWIPS more effectively. It is **not** an education course. I think that one of the one-week COMAP symposia could be focused on how to become an effective trainer, motivator, training evaluator, etc. The topics listed on page three of the SOO TAP Recommendations could all be in this one-week Symposia. The COMAP core course should remain the centerpiece of COMET's residence courses and be focused on science.

3. In a four-week (or three-week) COMAP course it is impractical to have a Mentor Program; so I agree that it should be dropped. However, it would still be useful to have a modest project focused on a case study or forecast technique. Matt Kelsch and I did this in several of the one-week Hydrometeorology courses and it was a resounding success. At the end of the fourth week everyone could give a 15-minute powerpoint presentation on their topic. These short projects help to tie together topics discussed in class and apply them to operational problems.

4. I think that with more WES cases becoming available laboratory exercises can be designed that are increasingly relevant to office operations.

5. Although weather discussions take up time in COMAP, they are excellent tools for applying theoretical concepts discussed in class. Also, we get to know everyone in the class through map discussions. Rather than totally eliminating them, I would suggest having them three times a week instead of everyday.

6. I agree that it is critical to have outside classroom activities that promote greater interaction among the SOOs. We were quite fortunate in COMAP 2002 to have a great group of people that naturally interacted and formed friendships. Activities could be encouraged/fostered to enhance this experience at COMAP, but it also takes the right group of people to create this dynamic.

7. I know that some SOOs believed that there was too much regional bias in some topics. This is unavoidable since topics such as “Lake Effect Snows” or “Tornadoes Associated with Landfalling Hurricanes” are not useful to forecasters from Montana. However, people within the NWS move around. It is better to be a well-rounded meteorologist and see the big picture than become too regionalized. How does one ever know what it is you need to know to prepare for the future? SOOs need to be more flexible on this issue.

8. Yes, some speakers need to improve their presentation material and style of communication. Matt Kelsch and I went through our speaker list very carefully to choose people who not only knew their material well, but also had a lively presentation style. However, sometimes people could not make it to Boulder due to personal reasons or conflicts in their schedule. This problem can be minimized but not eliminated. Sometimes the best people in their field are not always the most compelling speakers.

9. I do not understand how any SOO can “opt out” of being in COMAP. Part of the initiation rite of being a SOO is attending COMAP. It seems that this issue needs to be resolved at the NWS Headquarters level, or certainly at the regional level. I understand that at different times of the year some SOOs need to be on station for severe local storms or winter weather. It is virtually impossible to choose four weeks in the year that doesn’t affect someone’s station responsibilities. This is a sacrifice for both the SOO as well as the other forecasters who must fill in while he/she is at COMAP.

The comment that a longer COMAP course is too long to accommodate the personal and office needs of today’s SOOs does not hold weight in my opinion. First, you only need to attend this course once. Secondly, a professional undergoes training constantly. One should make sacrifices, not excuses. Yes, most definitely, COMAP should be made a SOO job requirement.

10. Yes, SOOs should be held accountable for their performance on weekly quizzes. We gave quizzes in COMAP 2002 to mostly see how effective our speakers were at getting their message across. Given in this light, the quizzes were viewed in a non-threatening manner. However, some minimal level should be attained on each quiz to make sure that the student is fully engaged in the course.

11. Yes, prerequisite material should be given up to six months before the course. Of course, making sure that each student completes the material before coming to the course is a tricky prospect.

Thank you for reading and considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Jim Moore