

Charter of the *Unsaturated Zone Interest Group (UZIG)*

Section 1—Name

The full name of this organization is the *Unsaturated Zone Interest Group*. The group may also be referred to by the acronym, *UZIG*, when its meaning is clear from context. The acronym may additionally serve as a modifier, as in “*UZIG meeting*” or “*UZIG newsletter*.”

Section 2—Nature and Purpose

The purpose of this charter is to briefly formalize the nature and purpose of the Unsaturated Zone Interest Group (UZIG), and to provide a skeletal outline of its leadership, structure, and operations. The latter three topics are covered in subsequent “*Governance*” and “*Bylaws*” sections.

The Unsaturated Zone Interest Group is a loosely knit, non-profit, informal scientific organization hosted at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). It consists of personnel working on or otherwise interested in problems involving the *unsaturated zone*—in broad terms, that portion of the landscape between the land surface and deepest water table. The UZIG formed in 1988 and consists primarily of active researchers and support staff at the USGS, with additional members from other earth-science agencies and academic institutions around the world. The UZIG operated under implicit rules of governance and assumptions of purpose through 2012.

The Unsaturated Zone Interest Group exists principally to promote informal, interdisciplinary collaborations and sharing of ideas, expertise, and technical assets. Its mission is to advance unsaturated-zone science by fostering information exchange and collaborative studies among kindred groups across multiple organizations. The UZIG promotes these goals by organizing meetings and communicating through newsletters, webinars, and other digital media that provide widely accessible forums for information exchange about current unsaturated-zone science and technology.

Section 3—Governance

The Unsaturated Zone Interest Group (UZIG) is governed by a *Steering Committee* consisting of volunteers selected from the UZIG membership. The *Steering Committee* oversees selection of an overall coordinator, called the *UZIG Chair*, who is responsible for orchestrating *Steering Committee* operations and running business meetings at UZIG-wide assemblies. The *Steering Committee* is organized into a number of appropriately sized *Working Groups*, each of which serves a specific purpose and consists of one or more volunteer members, one or two of whom are willing to serve as *Leads*. *Working Group Leads* also serve as members of the *Steering Committee*. In addition to the *Working Group Leads*, the *Steering Committee* may also include *Members at Large*, who are generally past or prospective members of one or more *Working Groups*.

Section 4—Bylaws

4.1—Membership

UZIG membership is open to all interested practitioners of unsaturated-zone science and allied personnel provided that their membership is solely for the purpose of collegial (professional but non-commercial) cooperation for the advancement of knowledge.

4.2—Working Groups

The *UZIG Working Groups* shall be: (A) *Membership*, (B) *Governance*, (C) *Newsletters*, (D) *Web Page*, (E) *Webinars*, (F) *Meetings*, and (G) *Equipment*.

4.3—UZIG Steering Committee

The *UZIG Steering Committee* shall consist of 18 UZIG members who constitute the core decision making organ of the *UZIG*. Core decisions are defined as follows: (1) approving the *UZIG Charter* and amendments thereto; (2) commissioning (and decommissioning) *Working Groups* and, in coordination with this, approving *Working Group Leads* and managing the membership of the *Steering Committee*; and (3) selecting the *UZIG Chair*. Approval of core decisions requires concurrence of an absolute majority of the *Steering Committee*.

Steering Committee Members serve a term of two years, with terms ending at the end of December in odd years. Near the end of its term, the *Steering Committee* will identify and select the composition of the subsequent *Steering Committee*. Multiple terms are allowed, with the goal of maintaining a healthy balance between turnover and experience.

4.4—UZIG Chair

The *UZIG Chair* shall be selected for a term of two years, with terms ending at the end of December in even years, by obtaining an absolute majority of *Steering Committee* votes among willing candidates identified by the *Membership* and *Governance Working Groups*.

The *UZIG Chair* shall coordinate communication among the *Working Groups* and the *Steering Committee*, and shall delegate such tasks as necessary to ensure communication between the *Steering Committee* and the UZIG as a whole.

The *UZIG Chair* shall be responsible for scheduling regular teleconference meetings of the *Steering Committee* as needed to conduct its business and maintain vitality. *Steering Committee* meetings will be held as often as the Chair deems necessary, but at least biannually.