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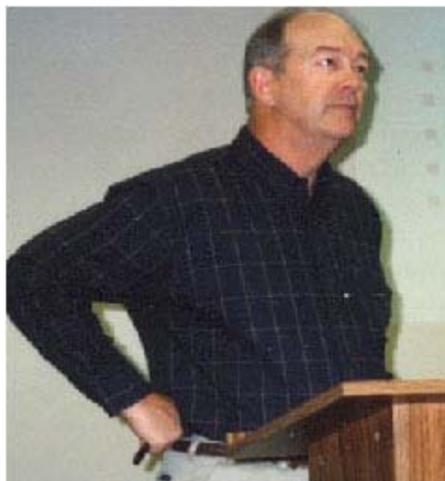
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U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory



Water-quality specialists focus on quality control, data bases

The NWQL hosted District water-quality specialists from the Southeastern and Western Regions December 4-6 at the Denver Federal Center.

A follow-on workshop at DFC is scheduled for water-quality specialists from the Northeastern and Central Regions January 29-31.

WATER-QUALITY INITIATIVES — Stephen K. Sorenson, Acting Chief, Office of Water Quality, kicks off the plenary session of the District Water-Quality Specialists Workshops, December 4, in Denver, with a promise to be proactive in regional and district issues. Sorenson reviewed various training initiatives, data-base issues, and the need to improve USGS capability in molecular microbiology. He emphasized the need to form a close partnership between his office and the water-quality specialists throughout USGS.

Purpose of the workshops is to explore (1) laboratory, quality-assurance/quality-control and data-base issues that the Districts face in maintaining and developing water-quality programs, and (2) to improve communication with laboratory and technical support staff.

A new look

We changed the nameplate this year to focus on our main products and services. Prior emphasis on the word *Newsletter* always seemed innocuous. We hope you like *Water Logs*; the design is by Sue Roberts, our colleague in the Wyoming District Office. We also pledge to improve the content—after all, new clothes and catchy names can only take you so far. Enhanced communication about NWQL activities and customer interests is our goal. Drop us a line and let us know your thoughts. The transom is always open.

• Ed.

Competitive sourcing in Lab's future?

Lab Chief Greg Mohrman announced December 18 that the NWQL might not be included in “competitive outsourcing in the short-term.” The announcement followed a telephone call with USGS senior staff at Headquarters in Reston.

Mohrman said that “we might not be part of any nomination for A-76 studies in fiscal year 2003,” but he quickly added that this conclusion is only “preliminary.” He said that “even if we are not a part of any near-term competitions, we could still face a competition at some point beyond FY03.”

“We have strong advocacy from Headquarters personnel for the critical mission support that we provide to the U.S. Geological Survey,” said Mohrman.

The December announcement followed Mohrman's report to employees October 24 that National Water Quality Laboratory services will possibly be competed with the private sector. A timeline for the competition was not announced. Mohrman said that the NWQL would have to be nominated first with notification to the U.S. Congress.

Mohrman said the entire Laboratory probably would be involved in the competition rather than a portion of its services, although nothing is certain at this preliminary stage. The process of competing Federal Government jobs and services is referred to as A-76, which is the number of a circular published by the Office of Management and Budget. Circular A-76 says the Government should not compete with its citizens in the competitive enterprise system.

After the announcement, the Lab Chief and members of his management team met in Reston October 25 with Steve Sorenson and Tim Miller from the Office of Water Quality for a workshop on the A-76 process. The training session included participants from acquisition, budgeting, personnel, and representatives from other U.S. Geological Survey disciplines.

Meanwhile, in a memo sent to U.S. Interior Department employees November 26, Secretary Gail Norton said the department's bureaus and offices are identifying activities that can be “subject to competition” with private-sector companies during the next two years. Jobs that can be done better by private companies will be given to them after a review that will be conducted “independently and fairly,” she said.

“This initiative, with the Administration's other management reforms, challenges each of us to examine the work we are doing and to find the best, most cost-effective ways to deliver excellent customer service,” Norton said.

ACS training course set for NWQL

The National Water Quality Laboratory has scheduled the American Chemical Society to present a short course on Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) Feb. 11-15. The two consecutive 2 ½-day sessions will be held in the lecture hall at the Core Lab in building 810, Denver Federal Center. The course is tailored to fit scientists, managers, and technologists working in an environmental analytical laboratory.

Emphasis will be on the practical aspects of selection and operation of analytical methodology to meet the needs of programs that must submit data to regulatory agencies.

Key topics include the following:

- Operational requirements imposed on labs that must operate under GLP protocol
- What the regulations say and how to implement them
- How to apply QA/QC principles to improve effectiveness of lab operations

- Ways to adapt current GLP to meet changing requirements
- Measurements traceability, calibration, record keeping

Instructors will also review the general requirements for ISO (International Organization for Standardization) Standard 17025 for testing laboratories, including the competence to carry out tests, calibrations, and sampling, using standard methods, nonstandard methods, and laboratory-developed methods.

This training is part of continuous improvement initiatives designed to keep the NWQL in the forefront as a superior analytical services provider.

Frequently asked questions

Billing web site and an updated customer billing report schedule for FY02

How do I access the NWQL's customer billing web site? Customers may access the web site using the NWQL's USGS-Visible web page at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS>. Scroll down and select "Services." Then choose "Customer Billing Reports" on the resulting page.

What has changed? The user code (uc), cost center (cc), and exception reports are now combined in a single monthly report that is easier to read.

Who may access the reports? All District personnel may access the weekly and monthly reports.

When will reports be available? All weekly and monthly reports will be available within 3 working days of the date in the billing report schedule.

What information is included in these weekly and monthly reports? Weekly reports are convenient for tracking sample login and reviewing charges for supplies and postage. Monthly reports reflect actual charges during the monthly billing process. Some bills are adjusted only during the monthly billing process. Prior months are adjusted only on monthly billing reports.

How do I view the weekly login and monthly billing reports? (1) Select "Services" on the NWQL's USGS-visible web page at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS>. Then choose "Customer Billing Reports." (2) Scroll and select (highlight) a user code from the pick list by clicking on it. (3) Then select the button "Reports for User Code." A list of file names and report titles will be displayed. (4) Select the file name of a weekly or monthly report.

How do I find the report I need? Select (highlight) a user code from the pick list and click on the button "Reports for User Code." As an example, for a weekly report entitled "Lab Weekly Report for 20011101 for User Code 06," select 06 *labweek* 20011101 where 06 is the user code and 20011101 is the combined calendar year, month (November), and weekly tag for that month's billing.

For a monthly report entitled "Lab Monthly Report for 200110 for User Code 06," the procedure is similar. For the example 06 *labmnth* 200110, 06 is the user code and 200110 is the combined calendar year and month's billing report for October.

How do I interpret the report? The formats for the weekly and monthly reports are identical. Definitions for the fields in the reports are included in the "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the NWQL Customer Billing Web Site" and "How to Interpret the Billing Report Schedule." Both pages are accessible by selecting "Services" on the NWQL's USGS-visible web page at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS> Then click on "Customer Billing Reports." Finally, choose either page for assistance in interpreting the weekly or monthly reports.

Does the NWQL have a billing schedule for the current FY? Yes. Select "Services" on the NWQL's USGS-visible web page at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS> Then choose "Customer Billing Reports." The schedule for FY02 is accessible by clicking on "Billing Report Schedule" at the bottom of the page listing the user codes.

What information is contained in the NWQL's billing report schedule for FY02? Fields include the following:

LAB REPORT—calendar year (for example, 2001) and bill month (for example, 10 = October). This number helps Districts locate a monthly billing report on the customer web page.

FY02 LABMONTHS—bill month and calendar year

WEEKS INCLUDED—actual dates of each week's logins associated with each month's billing

LABWEEKS—calendar year, month, and week assigned to each week, inclusive of a month's billing (for example, 2001101 = calendar year 2001, month (October), week 1)

What is the NWQL's billing report schedule for FY02? The NWQL generally prepares weekly reports every Tuesday for the prior week (Sunday through Saturday). The monthly billing is processed on the second Tuesday of each month. All prior unbilled weeks are included in the month's billing.

Where can I go for additional help? Please contact labhelp@usgs.gov or telephone 1-866-ASK-NWQL (1-866-275-6975) for questions or comments about this or any other customer-service issue.

●Merilee Bennett
Nancy Wydoski
Allison Brigham

Letters, faxes, and e-mail

Greetings,

For every situation where contaminant hydrologists can make linkages to an easily traceable source of fuel-related constituents, there are other situations where there is a need for additional or independent evidence I am pleased to see news of an NWQL and NRP [USGS National Research Program] collaboration to provide a custom "fuel characterization" analysis that can assist in these efforts.

For more information, see the write-up in the July 2001 *NWQL Newsletter* or go to the NWQL website at <A HREF="<http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/Public/news/jul01/jul01.htm#voc>"><http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/Public/news/jul01/jul01.htm#voc>. It would also be of interest to apply these methods in coalescent plumes or plumes that are complex from extreme inhomogeneities in aquifer materials (e.g., consolidated or fractured rock).

Daniel J. Hippe
USGS, Reston
10/4/01

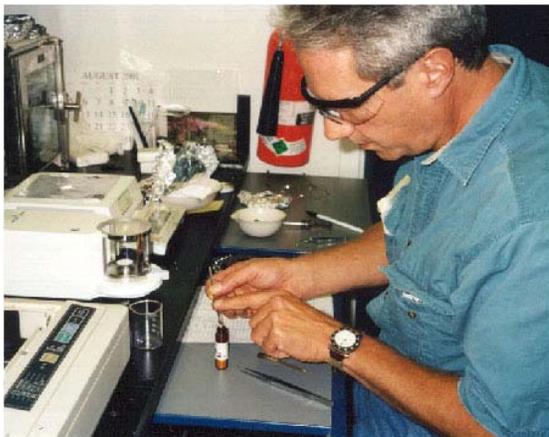
To NWQL staff:

I have been notified that there is some in-house confusion regarding the effective dates of the LT-MDL (long-term method detection levels) and LRL (laboratory reporting levels). When the LT-MDL process was started several years ago, the NWQL received guidance from the Office of Water Quality and the Regional water-quality specialists that we should coordinate the effective dates to be in line with the start of the Water Year (Oct. 1). The request was made so that the reporting features would be consistent throughout the year, and this would help the Districts to prepare their annual data reports.

The old Laboratory Analytical Data System, however, didn't have good direct links to the sample-collection date, and so the NWQL used the login date for samples as the time to implement the change in reporting feature. This result is not what our customers wanted because the samples collected in late September would often be logged in October. When the Districts prepared data reports, they would have to edit some of the results to make the data look consistent.

The new Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) has the capability to directly link the reporting feature to the date of sample collection. This year (Water Year 2002), the LT-MDL and LRL reporting features are effective on the date of collection. We are now in line with what our customers have been asking for.

Thomas J. Maloney
Quality Assurance Officer
10/31/01



A STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE

— Jim Kammer, organic program analyst, prepares a standard for the Exeter CHN elemental analyzer. The Exeter and its methods 2631 and 2632 (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency method 440.0) replace the old OI-524 instrument and lab code 305 for suspended organic carbon.

New publications

Furlong, E.T., Anderson, B.D., Werner, S.L., Soliven, P.P., Coffey, L.J., and Burkhardt, M.R., 2001, Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Determination of pesticides in water by graphitized carbon-based solid-phase extraction and high-performance liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry: U.S Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 01-4134, 73 p.

Update on new method reports

Garbarino, J.R., Bednar, A.J., and Burkhardt, M.R., Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Arsenic speciation in natural-water samples using laboratory and field methods: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report xx-xxxx. Status: Report Specialist review 12/3/01.

Jha, V.K., and Wydoski, D.S., Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Determination of organophosphate pesticides in filtered water by C-18 solid-phase extraction and capillary-column gas chromatography with flame photometric detection: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report xx-xxxx. Status: Sent to Office of Water Quality 12/7/01 for method approval.

Zaugg, S.D., Smith, S.G., Schroeder, M.P., Barber, L.B., and Burkhardt, M.R., in press, Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Determination of wastewater compounds by polystyrene divinylbenzene solid-phase extraction and capillary-column gas chromatography/mass spectrometry: U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 01-4186. Status: Sent to printer 12/20/01.

TRACKING HAZARDOUS

WASTE—Mike Werito, physical science technician in the Safety Office, enters data in the Laboratory's chemical inventory. Mike's father, John Werito, was a Navajo Code Talker in World War II. The Code Talkers used an encrypted version of the Navajo language when transmitting messages during the war. Just last month, John Werito received the Congressional Silver Medal for his military service. Coincidentally, "Windtalkers," the World War II movie featuring the Navajo Code Talkers and the Marines assigned to protect them, is scheduled to open later this year.



Seminars scheduled

Richard L. Reynolds, 11 a.m., January 16
Dust—Past, Present, and Future

E.M. Thurman and Imma Ferrer, date to be announced
Pathways of Diazinon Degradation in Tap Water

NWQL Seminars are held in the Training Room, Building 95,
Denver Federal Center. Visitors are welcome.



OIL AND GREASE—Organic solvent is added to a water sample as part of the method to extract oil and grease. Jennifer Daly, physical science technician in the carbon lab, shakes a separatory funnel during the extraction process. The presence of petroleum products is an important water-quality characteristic when checking for oil spills.

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Diana Rime, Editorial Assistant

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