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**U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Geological Survey**

## Federal employees win bid for work by the National Water Quality Laboratory

### Study concludes Federal Lab structure most efficient

The U.S. Geological Survey has concluded that its National Water Quality Laboratory (NWQL) in Lakewood, Colo., should continue to be primarily staffed and operated by government employees.

A one-year “A-76 Competitive Sourcing Study” required USGS NWQL employees to compete with private companies by submitting a proposal for operating the environmental analytical laboratory more efficiently. The competition included every operational area of the NWQL, including all science and science-supported elements. The review was conducted in response to requirements that Federal agencies determine if private providers could do a better, more cost-efficient job of performing some functions considered commercial in nature.

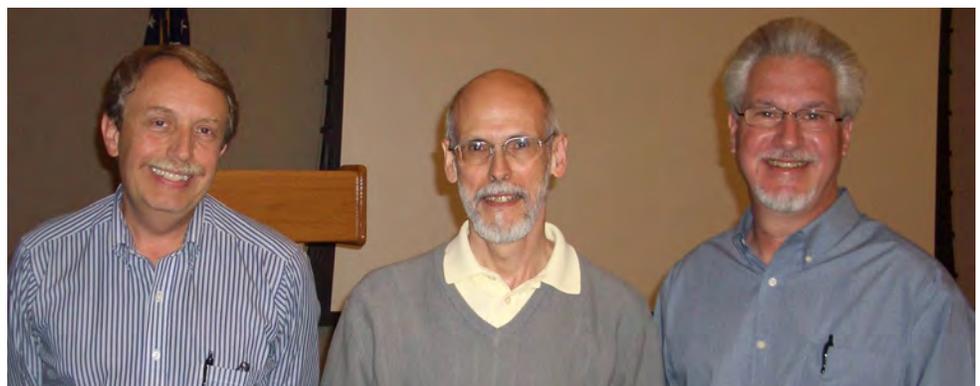
“This team has demonstrated it can continue to provide the USGS and its many cooperators with high-quality, consistent chemical analyses of water, sediment, and tissues,” said Mark Myers, director of USGS.

The USGS NWQL analyzes more than 35,000 samples per year resulting in more than 1.3 million water-quality measurements. The laboratory staff consists of about 125 Federal employees who provide high-quality data for USGS national, regional, and local programs and projects that assess current and emerging water-quality issues of interest to scientists, decision-makers, and the Nation.

The state-of-the-art building that houses the USGS NWQL opened in 1999 on the Denver Federal Center.

The competitive sourcing study was announced August 4, 2006, and the performance decision was publicly announced September 27, 2007,

*(continued on following page)*



**WINNING SMILES**—Taking part in the Town Hall meeting September 27 were Greg Mohrman (from left to right), chief, NWQL; Tim Miller, chief, Office of Water Quality; and Dave Reppert, chief, Analytical Services, NWQL. Reppert announced that the agency tender was the successful proposal put together by the NWQL Most Efficient Organization (MEO) Team.

in FedBizOpps, an online database of Federal Government contracting opportunities. NWQL employees were informed of the decision at a Town Hall meeting on the same day.

More information about the USGS NWQL is available online at [http://nwql.usgs.gov/Public/pubs/NWQL\\_Summ.pdf](http://nwql.usgs.gov/Public/pubs/NWQL_Summ.pdf).

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Source: The contact for this News Release is Dave Ozman, telephone 303-202-4744, [dozman@usgs.gov](mailto:dozman@usgs.gov).

## Mohrman lauds “good news”

“Today was truly the best Town Hall meeting we have had in a long time because of the good news regarding the MEO [Most Efficient Organization] win,” said Greg Mohrman, chief of the National Water Quality Laboratory (NWQL).

“This is a win for the entire NWQL and the U.S. Geological Survey. I cannot compliment the Laboratory’s employees enough for the professionalism and perseverance they have demonstrated over the past year. Many organizations are unable to sustain their primary mission under the stress of such a major distraction,” added Mohrman in a message to the staff.

“However, the employees and contractor staff of the NWQL proved what dedication and focus can accomplish. You all have my sincere thanks and appreciation for the way you have handled yourselves and conducted our mission throughout this difficult process,” said Mohrman.

## Deputy director pleased with competitive sourcing decision

“I am pleased to announce that the Competitive Sourcing study of the National Water Quality Laboratory (NWQL) has resulted in these activities remaining in-house,” said Robert Doyle, deputy director, USGS.

The study of the NWQL was conducted in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, Performance of Commercial Activities. Initiation of the standard study included 112 Federal and 13 contractor positions. The competed Federal positions represented all operational areas of the Laboratory. A proposal to create a Most Efficient Organization (MEO), submitted by a team of Federal employees from the NWQL, prevailed.

“The NWQL will begin working with the servicing Human Resources Office to transition from the current organizational structure to that of the MEO, as proposed by the Federal employee team. The MEO will continue to use the successful approach of combining a core Federal workforce with a commercial partner to provide experienced and flexible staffing. No disruption in science and mission support or changes to pricing in fiscal year 2008 analytical services are anticipated. The highly dedicated staff will continue to provide the quality analytical, research, and field supply services that customers have come to expect,” said Doyle in a message September 27 to all USGS employees.

“This was the first USGS standard Competitive Sourcing study to be conducted on an entire science center. I want to thank all of the NWQL employees who participated in and contributed to the completion of this important competition. In addition, I want to thank the Contracting Officer, members of the Preliminary Planning Team, Performance Work Statement Team, MEO Team, Source Selection Evaluation Board, and the Agency Tender Officer for their exceptional diligence during this study.”

Questions may be directed to the Competitive Sourcing Team at [Competitive\\_sourcing@usgs.gov](mailto:Competitive_sourcing@usgs.gov).

## Most Efficient Organization workload analysis to be followed by buyouts, reduction in force; mission will be uninterrupted

By David Reppert, Chief, Analytical Services

In September of 2006, we began an A-76 Standard Study of the NWQL. The Preliminary Planning Team identified 33 FTE (full-time equivalent) that would remain as the Residual Government Organization (RGO), with the remaining 112 FTE to be included in the study. The most efficient organi-

zation (MEO) was developed by the MEO team and is a direct response to the Performance Work Statement (PWS) included in the A-76 Solicitation for the Standard Study of the laboratory.

The team conducted a workload analysis and reviewed the tasks pre-

sented in the PWS, and made determinations on the number of personnel needed to effectively accomplish the tasks, the type of positions needed (for example, part time, full time, term, student, contractor support), as well as the grade levels required. In the course

*(continued on following page)*

## CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD—

The U.S. Department of the Interior award for Customer Service Excellence was presented August 15 to the NWQL Warehouse/Log-In group by Tom Casadevall, regional director, Central Region. Shown (left to right): Cindy Hale, Doug Mynard, Clarice Perret, Milton Marshall, Jerry Putsche, Roy Brannan, Eathan Gammel, Rob Prokop (behind Gammel), Steve Martin, Patricia Alex, Phil Grano, Roger Borrego, and Casadevall. In addition, James Steverson, chief, Information Technology, was recognized as “Active Directory Deployment Coordinator for USGS Denver Federal Center,” at the Awards Ceremony on the Denver Federal Center. Thirty-year length of service pins went to John Garbarino, research chemist and acting head of Quality Assurance; Mike Schroeder, supervisor, Liquid Chromatography/Sediment Section; and Merle Shockey, assistant chief, NWQL. Also taking part in the ceremony were Mark Myers, director, USGS, and Bob Doyle, deputy director. PHOTOGRAPH BY RANAE GONZALES.



of this review recommendations were made that involved elimination of a few positions; several downgrades and upgrades of positions; a few additional positions were added; and some positions were made into career ladder positions.

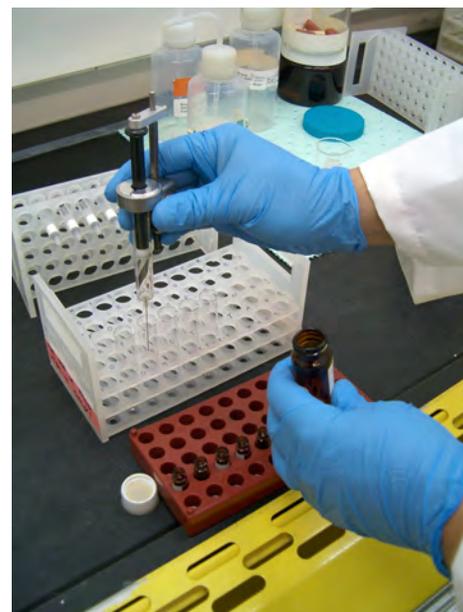
The team determined that no major realignments were needed in the organization. For study purposes, the Team grouped the existing elements of the lab into three MEO functional areas: Science, Science Support, and Business Support.

The Science area consists of Analytical Services and the Methods Research and Development sections. Science Support consists of the Safety, Health and Environment Services, Support Services, and Quality Control and Assurance sections. Business Support consists of the Administrative Office, Information Technology Services, and Business Development Services sections.

For supervision and technical guidance within the MEO, we used a portion of existing FTE in the Residual Government Organization. In essence, the MEO “purchased” supervisory and technical management employee-hours from the RGO. The net result is an organization that will blend in with the existing Residual Government Organization to allow for a smooth transition and a continuation of the quantity and quality of work expected from the NWQL.

The next steps in our process involve the actual staffing of the MEO. We have requested Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments/Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VSIP/VERA) and are awaiting final approval. Once we have completed this process the next step will be to go through the Reduction In Force (RIF). Only after this step has been completed will we know the names of personnel that have been placed in the MEO positions. We will likely

have some position vacancies to fill following the RIF process. As you can tell, it will take some time before the MEO is actively in operation. Until that time comes, we will continue to fulfill the mission of the NWQL with the honesty, integrity, and quality our customers have come to expect.



## Perfect score awarded to NWQL for latest wastewater proficiency study

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) provided good news for the NWQL regarding the recently concluded external validation study. The NWQL received a satisfactory rating of 100 percent for all 130 analytes. Mary Cast, the Quality Assurance coordinator for the NWQL, called the results for the third quarter of 2007 “outstanding.”

It was the best performance yet on the wastewater proficiency study. “The results are even more significant,” added Cast, “because we were undergoing the A-76 study and finalizing preparations for the NYSDOH laboratory audit.”

A statistical summary of the study is listed in the accompanying table. To view the latest results from NYSDOH, follow the link at URL <http://nwql.usgs.gov/Public/Performance/publicny0707.html>. All results have been combined into one pdf file. Each page can be printed out separately, however.

To view all posted NYSDOH nonpotable results, go to URL <http://nwql.usgs.gov/Public/Performance/nynonpotable.html> and select a study.

**Table.** Results for New York State Department of Health shipment 305 (nonpotable water samples, 3rd quarter, 2007.

	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Percent acceptable</b>
Organic	93	100
Inorganic	37	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

Four analytes were not evaluated because the NWQL requested that they be dropped from the accreditation, as follows (whole-water methods): cobalt, inductively coupled plasma–mass spectrometry (ICP–MS); copper, ICP–MS; nickel, ICP–MS; and zinc, ICP–MS. The NWQL is pursuing accreditation for these analytes using collision/reaction cell ICP–MS.

In addition, the NWQL is pursuing accreditation for chromium, vanadium, selenium, and arsenic by collision/reaction cell ICP–MS. Cast said she hopes to have this process completed by late November 2007.

In a related note, John Garbarino, acting chief of the Quality Assurance Section, was complimented by two NYSDOH auditors during a briefing August 2. The auditors applauded all the NWQL analysts that they interacted with during the audit and remarked on their professionalism and cooperation. The auditors were especially pleased that standard operating procedures were being followed.

Garbarino commended the staff whose analytical processes were audited. He was pleased and said all involved were “outstanding representatives of the NWQL.”



## New chief named for Methods Research

Jeff McCoy started work April 30 as the new chief of the Methods Research and Development Program. The announcement was made April 19 by Greg Mohrman, chief, NWQL.

McCoy said his primary goals for the program include streamlining the reporting and publishing processes and becoming the primary contact with the Toxic Substances Hydrology Program and the National Water-Quality Assessment Program. He also is working with technical leadership to develop a strategic plan to set research priorities and to strengthen interaction with other Government agencies. McCoy added that he looks forward to meeting colleagues who plan to attend the National Water-Quality Workshop in Galveston, Texas.

McCoy received his B.S. in chemistry from Southern Illinois University and his Ph.D. in chemistry from Colorado State University. Much of his career was spent with Dow Chemical Company, where he held various positions relating to analytical methods development and the application of new analytical techniques to product development and testing.

Most recently, he served as a visiting scientist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, where he used his analytical skills to apply advanced instrumentation to monitor contaminants from aircraft.

## NWQL Quality Assurance news

The National Water Quality Laboratory has implemented two new plans in 2007. The new Ethics and Data Integrity Plan emphasizes the overriding importance of ethics and data integrity in the performance of all analytical work and support systems, obtains the commitment of employees to the principle that all analyses shall be performed in a controlled and documented manner, and ensures that employees meet specific ethical and data integrity requirements defined in the plan.

The plan also implements processes and procedures that provide in-depth monitoring of analytical results to help ensure that results are scientifically defensible and of known and consistent quality.

The Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan for the National Field Supply Service (NFSS) also was implemented in 2007 to establish sampling and testing procedures and acceptance criteria for One-Stop Shopping field supplies to ensure that supplies meet the required quality.

The Quality Assurance Section has two new web-based tools to help record and track information. The Audit and Corrective Action Tracking System records internal and external audit findings and associated corrective actions in a database. The Integrated Document Management System stores and tracks documentation and automatically notifies staff of pending review and training requirements.

Visit the new Quality Assurance Section webpage to find specific information on the new plans and NFSS certificates of analysis, as well as other useful information related to quality assurance, at URL [http://www.nwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/QAS/qas\\_usgsvisible.html](http://www.nwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/QAS/qas_usgsvisible.html).

## Ethics training set

Nancy Baumgartner, deputy ethics counselor from the USGS Ethics Office in Reston, Virginia, will present ethics training to all Federal employees at the NWQL, December 13 and 14. The training will include guidelines on accepting gifts from outside sources, acceptance of travel and related expenses, gifts between employees, outside employment, misuse of official position, time, and equipment; and political activity. Questions may be submitted in advance.

Times for the sessions follow:

Thursday, 1:00–2:30 p.m.,  
December 13

Friday, 9:30–11:00 a.m.,  
December 14

Both sessions will take place at the auditorium in building 810. The training course is mandatory for all NWQL Federal employees. Contact Jeanne Hatcher, ethics coordinator, by November 26 to schedule a session.

## Fume hoods upgraded

Selected fume hoods in building 95 were upgraded in July from a constant volume system to a variable air volume system. The purpose of this upgrade was two-fold, according to the NWQL Safety Office:

1. The variable air volume system enhances the safety of the hoods. The critical factor for capture of contaminants is the velocity of air at the face of the fume hood. The variable air volume system maintains a constant velocity in the optimal range for effective contaminant capture across the hood face for different configurations of sash openings. The previous constant volume system allowed the velocity at the hood face to vary within an acceptable, but not optimal, range for different sash configurations.

2. The variable air volume system allows energy savings by reducing the volume of air exhausted by the hoods under conditions that do not require a larger volume for safe control of contaminants, for instance, when the sash is closed or has a small opening. The constant volume system required the same amount of air to be exhausted under all conditions, except in the unoccupied mode.

Safety was the priority for this upgrade; however, funding was provided through a grant for energy-saving projects. Executive Order 13423, Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management, requires that Federal agencies reduce facility energy use per square foot (including industrial and laboratory facilities) by 3 percent per year through the end of

2015. This project was designed as an avenue for building 95 to achieve this goal.

Although the exact energy savings have not been determined, notable efficiencies have been achieved in air intake and exhaust. The volume of intake (supply air) has been reduced by 30 percent and the exhaust air has increased by 20 percent. Considering that supply air has to be conditioned by evaporative coolers/chillers for cooling or boilers for heating, the overall energy savings could be substantial. In addition to the improvements in energy use, the facility now maintains a more constant temperature throughout the year.

• CARLOS AROZARENA and  
HELEN WHARRY

(NWQL authors in **boldface**)

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**Note:** New publication versions of the following reports have been released on the USGS Publications Server:

**WRI 01-4186 version 1.1:** 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. <http://pubs.usgs.gov/wri/wri014186/>

**TM 5-B2 version 1.1:** Determination of wastewater compounds in sediment and soil by pressurized solvent extraction, solid-phase extraction, and capillary-column gas chromatography/mass spectrometry. <http://pubs.usgs.gov/tm/2006/tm5b2/>

**TM 5-B4 version 1.1:** Determination of wastewater compounds in whole water by continuous liquid–liquid extraction and capillary-column gas chromatography/mass spectrometry. <http://pubs.usgs.gov/tm/2006/05B04/>



**FUTURE EARTH SCIENTISTS**—Gary Cottrell (left), supervisory chemist, Metals Unit, guides students from Cherry Creek Alternative School, in Denver, through the Laboratory April 2. Cottrell is shown explaining the preparation of organic tissue samples. In the second photograph (below), Amber Eule-Nashoba, biological science technician, explains the preservation and archival techniques for invertebrates. The students are all studying chemistry and geology at their Cherry Creek school. PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS LINDLEY.

## Chief named for Quality Assurance Section

Douglas Stevenson is set to join the National Water Quality Laboratory November 25 as the new chief of the Quality Assurance Section. Greg Mohrman, chief, NWQL, announced the selection November 2.

Stevenson was employed by Tetra Tech Inc. He was involved in the final environmental cleanup taking place at Rocky Mountain Arsenal. He has 25 years of experience as a chemist and project manager, including management of laboratories, laboratory support contracts, and ground-water monitoring contracts.

A detailed profile will follow in the next issue of Water Logs.



## Employees break for annual summer picnic

Employees of the National Water Quality Laboratory held their annual summer picnic the last week of July on the patio of building 95. Laboratory employees were joined by members of the Branch of Quality Systems, Office of Water Quality, National Research Program scientists in the building, contract employees, students from a water-quality training course at the NWQL, and representatives from the General Services Administration.

PICNIC PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF MCCOY.



## News briefs

Dr. E.J. Murby, principal chemist, National Measurement Institute, Sydney, Australia, presented a seminar September 10 at the NWQL entitled "Introduction to the National Measurement Institute in Australia and Overview of Work Done by the Chemical Reference Methods Group."

\* \* \*

Charlie Stern, an examiner for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), toured the NWQL August 27. He was accompanied by Kathleen McCormick, the new budget officer for Central Region; Bill Horak, acting regional executive for Water; Warren Day, deputy regional geologist; and Frank D'Erchia, Regional Director's Office. The OMB examiner makes recommendations for the USGS during development of the Federal budget.

\* \* \*

A representative from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) toured the NWQL March 26 as part of a visit to the Central Region offices in Denver to gather information regarding USGS activities in the Western United States. NIOSH is evaluating the need to strengthen its presence in the West.

\* \* \*

USGS Central Region contracting personnel toured the NWQL June 7 for an orientation and to become familiar with the Laboratory's mission requirements. Contracting officers and specialists provide critical mission support to the NWQL. As partners in accomplishing the science mission, these personnel gained valuable insight into the technical challenges faced by the laboratory. In particular, they gained a better understanding of the NWQL's requirements for quality control, its dependence on supplies that meet critical timelines and costs, and its reliance on vendor services throughout the operation.

\* \* \*

Edward P. Kolodziej, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Nevada, Reno, presented a seminar June 28, at the Denver Federal Center, entitled "Rangeland Grazing as a Source of Steroid Hormones to Surface Waters." Cattle and livestock excrete endogenous steroid hormones, including estrogens, androgens, and progestins. Allowing grazing livestock direct access to surface water can result in the release of steroid hormones in agricultural watersheds, said Kolodziej. He said numerous studies have shown that low concentrations of certain steroid hormones can affect reproductive output in fish.

\* \* \*

Jim Dobbs, chemist in the Metals Unit, received a 20-year pin at the NWQL Town Hall meeting in January.

\* \* \*

Future neighbors from St. Anthony's Hospital toured the NWQL March 30 as part of an ongoing dialogue with the hospital to promote understanding, particularly with regard to potential air-quality issues. The City of Lakewood and General Services Administration personnel also joined the tour. Merle Shockey, supervisory chemist, led the tour.

\* \* \*

Jay Hestbeck, deputy regional executive for biology, Central Region, was briefed by the NWQL leadership team January 17 prior to a walk-through of the Laboratory. Janice Ward, Office of Water Quality, joined the tour.

\* \* \*

The Office of Organizational and Employee Development will present the short course entitled Aquatic Chemistry (QW2032) on January 28 through February 1, 2008, at the National Training Center in Denver. Registration deadline is December 14. For more information, contact Brian Kimball, bkimball@usgs.gov, telephone 801-908-5047.

## Newsletter Staff

Jon Raese, Editor and Photographer  
Suzanne Roberts, Layout and Design

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