

SURFACE-WATER-QUALITY RECORDS

Records of surface-water quality ordinarily are obtained at or near stream-gaging stations because discharge data are useful in the interpretation of surface-water quality. Records of surface-water quality in this report involve a variety of types of data and measurement frequencies.

Classification of Records

Water-quality data for surface-water sites are grouped into one of three classifications. A *continuous-record station* is a site where data are collected on a regularly scheduled basis. Frequency may be one or more times daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. A *partial-record station* is a site where limited water-quality data are collected systematically over a period of years. Frequency of sampling is usually less than quarterly. A *miscellaneous sampling site* is a location other than a continuous- or partial-record station, where samples are collected to give better areal coverage to define water-quality conditions in the river basin.

A careful distinction needs to be made between *continuous records* as used in this report and *continuous recordings* that refer to a continuous graph or a series of discrete values recorded at short intervals. Some records of water quality, such as temperature and specific conductance, may be obtained through continuous recordings; however, because of costs, most data are obtained only monthly or less frequently.

Accuracy of the Records

One of four accuracy classifications is applied for measured physical properties at continuous-record stations on a scale ranging from poor to excellent. The accuracy rating is based on data values recorded before any shifts or corrections are made. Additional consideration also is given to the amount of publishable record and to the amount of data that have been corrected or shifted.

Rating the accuracy of continuous water-quality records

[\leq , less than or equal to; \pm , plus or minus value shown; $^{\circ}\text{C}$, degree Celsius; $>$, greater than; %, percent; mg/L, milligram per liter; pH unit, standard pH unit]

Measured field parameter	Ratings of accuracy (Based on combined fouling and calibration drift corrections applied to the record)			
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Water temperature	$\leq \pm 0.2^{\circ}\text{C}$	$> \pm 0.2 - 0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$	$> \pm 0.5 - 0.8^{\circ}\text{C}$	$> \pm 0.8^{\circ}\text{C}$
Specific conductance	$\leq \pm 3\%$	$> \pm 3 - 10\%$	$> \pm 10 - 15\%$	$> \pm 15\%$
Dissolved oxygen	$\leq \pm 0.3$ mg/L or $\leq \pm 5\%$, whichever is greater	$> \pm 0.3 - 0.5$ mg/L or $> \pm 5 - 10\%$, whichever is greater	$> \pm 0.5 - 0.8$ mg/L or $> \pm 10 - 15\%$, which- ever is greater	$> \pm 0.8$ mg/L or $> \pm 15\%$, whichever is greater
pH	$\leq \pm 0.2$ units	$> \pm 0.2 - 0.5$ units	$> \pm 0.5 - 0.8$ units	$> \pm 0.8$ units
Turbidity	$\leq \pm 0.5$ turbidity units or $\leq \pm 5\%$, whichever is greater	$> \pm 0.5 - 1.0$ turbidity units or $> \pm 5 - 10\%$, whichever is greater	$> \pm 1.0 - 1.5$ turbidity units or $> \pm 10 - 15\%$, whichever is greater	$> \pm 1.5$ turbidity units or $> \pm 15\%$, which- ever is greater

Arrangement of Records

Water-quality records collected at a surface-water daily record station are published immediately following that record, regardless of the frequency of sample collection. Station number and name are the same for both records. Where a surface-water daily record station is not available or where the water quality differs significantly from that at the nearby surface-water station, the continuing water-quality record is published with its own station number and name in the regular downstream-order sequence. Water-quality data for partial-record stations and for miscellaneous sampling sites appear in separate tables following the table of discharge measurements at miscellaneous sites.

Onsite Measurements and Sample Collection

In obtaining water-quality data, a major concern is assuring that the data obtained represent the naturally occurring quality of the water. To ensure this, certain measurements, such as water temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen, must be made onsite when the samples are collected. To assure that measurements made in the laboratory also represent the naturally occurring water, carefully prescribed procedures must be followed in collecting the samples, in treating the samples to prevent changes in quality pending analysis, and in shipping the samples to the laboratory. Procedures for onsite measurements and for collecting, treating, and shipping samples are given in TWRIs Book 1, Chapter D2; Book 3, Chapters A1, A3, and A4; and Book 9, Chapters A1-A9. Most of the methods used for collecting and analyzing water samples are described in the TWRIs, which may be accessed from <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/twri/>. Also, detailed information on collecting, treating, and shipping samples can be obtained from the USGS Water Science Center (see address that is shown on the back of title page in this report).

Water Temperature

Water temperatures are measured at most of the water-quality stations. In addition, water temperatures are taken at the time of discharge measurements for water-discharge stations. For stations where water temperatures are taken manually once or twice daily, the water temperatures are taken at about the same time each day. Large streams have a small diurnal temperature change; shallow streams may have a daily range of several degrees and may follow closely the changes in air temperature. Some streams may be affected by waste-heat discharges.

At stations where recording instruments are used, either mean temperatures or maximum and minimum temperatures for each day are published. Water temperatures measured at the time of water-discharge measurements are on file in the USGS Water Science Center.

Sediment

Suspended-sediment concentrations are determined from samples collected by using depth-integrating samplers. Samples usually are obtained at several verticals in the cross section, or a single sample may be obtained at a fixed point and a coefficient applied to determine the mean concentration in the cross section.

During periods of rapidly changing flow or rapidly changing concentration, samples may be collected more frequently (twice daily or, in some instances, hourly). The published sediment discharges for days of rapidly changing flow or concentration are computed by the subdivided-day method (time-discharge weighted average). Therefore, for those days when the published sediment discharge value differs from the value computed as the product of discharge times mean concentration times 0.0027, the reader can assume that the sediment discharge for that day was computed by the subdivided-day method. For periods when no samples were collected, daily discharges of suspended sediment were estimated on the basis of water discharge, sediment concentrations observed immediately before and after the periods, and suspended-sediment loads for other periods of similar discharge.

At other stations, suspended-sediment samples are collected periodically at many verticals in the stream cross section. Although data collected periodically may represent conditions only at the time of observation, such data are useful in establishing seasonal relations between quality and streamflow and in predicting long-term sediment-discharge characteristics of the stream.

In addition to the records of suspended-sediment discharge, records of the periodic measurements of the particle-size distribution of the suspended sediment and bed material are included for some stations.

Laboratory Measurements

Samples for biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and indicator bacteria are analyzed locally. All other samples are analyzed in the USGS laboratory in Lakewood, Colorado, unless otherwise noted. Methods used in analyzing sediment samples and computing sediment records are given in TWRI, Book 5, Chapter C1. Methods used by the USGS laboratories are given in the TWRI, Book 1, Chapter D2; Book 3, Chapter C2; and Book 5, Chapters A1, A3, and A4. The TWRI publications may be accessed from <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/twri/>. These methods are consistent with ASTM standards and generally follow ISO standards.

Data Presentation

For continuing-record stations, information pertinent to the history of station operation is provided in descriptive headings preceding the tabular data. These descriptive headings give details regarding location, drainage area, period of record, type of data available, instrumentation, general remarks, cooperation, and extremes for parameters currently measured daily. Tables of chemical, physical, biological, radiochemical data, and so forth, obtained at a frequency less than daily are presented first. Tables of “daily values” of specific conductance, pH, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, and suspended sediment then follow in sequence.

In the descriptive headings, if the location is identical to that of the discharge gaging station, neither the LOCATION nor the DRAINAGE AREA statements are repeated. The following information is provided with each continuous-record station. Comments that follow clarify information presented under the various headings of the station description.

LOCATION.—See Data Presentation information in the EXPLANATION OF STAGE- AND WATER-DISCHARGE RECORDS section of this report (same comments apply).

DRAINAGE AREA.—See Data Presentation information in the EXPLANATION OF STAGE- AND WATER-DISCHARGE RECORDS section of this report (same comments apply).

PERIOD OF RECORD.—This indicates the time periods for which published water-quality records for the station are available. The periods are shown separately for records of parameters measured daily or continuously and those measured less than daily. For those measured daily or continuously, periods of record are given for the parameters individually.

INSTRUMENTATION.—Information on instrumentation is given only if a water-quality monitor temperature record, sediment pumping sampler, or other sampling device is in operation at a station.

REMARKS.—Remarks provide added information pertinent to the collection, analysis, or computation of the records.

COOPERATION.—Records provided by a cooperating organization or obtained for the USGS by a cooperating organization are identified here.

EXTREMES.—Maximums and minimums are given only for parameters measured daily or more frequently. For parameters measured weekly or less frequently, true maximums or minimums may not have been obtained. Extremes, when given, are provided for both the period of record and for the current water year.

REVISIONS.—Records are revised if errors in published water-quality records are discovered. Appropriate updates are made in the USGS distributed data system, NWIS, and subsequently to its Web-based national data system, NWISWeb (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis>). Users of USGS water-quality data are encouraged to obtain all required data from NWIS or NWISWeb to ensure that they have the most recent updates. Updates to the NWISWeb are made on an annual basis.

The surface-water-quality records for partial-record stations and miscellaneous sampling sites are published in separate tables following the table of discharge measurements at miscellaneous sites. No descriptive statements are given for these records. Each station is published with its own station number and name in the regular downstream-order sequence.

Remark Codes

The following remark codes may appear with the water-quality data in this section:

Printed Output	Remark
E	Value is estimated.
>	Actual value is known to be greater than the value shown.
<	Actual value is known to be less than the value shown.
M	Presence of material verified, but not quantified.
N	Presumptive evidence of presence of material.
U	Material specifically analyzed for, but not detected.
A	Value is an average.
V	Analyte was detected in both the environmental sample and the associated blanks.
S	Most probable value.

Water-Quality Control Data

The USGS National Water Quality Laboratory collects quality-control data on a continuing basis to evaluate selected analytical methods to determine long-term method detection levels (LT-MDLs) and laboratory reporting levels (LRLs). These values are re-evaluated each year on the basis of the most recent quality-control data and, consequently, may change from year to year.

This reporting procedure limits the occurrence of false positive error. Falsely reporting a concentration greater than the LT-MDL for a sample in which the analyte is not present is 1 percent or less. Application of the LRL limits the occurrence of false negative error. The chance of falsely reporting a nondetection for a sample in which the analyte is present at a concentration equal to or greater than the LRL is 1 percent or less.

Accordingly, concentrations are reported as less than LRL for samples in which the analyte either was not detected or did not pass identification. Analytes detected at concentrations between the LT-MDL and the LRL and that pass identification criteria are estimated. Estimated concentrations will be noted with a remark code of "E." These data should be used with the understanding that their uncertainty is greater than that of data reported without the E remark code.

Data generated from quality-control (QC) samples are a requisite for evaluating the quality of the sampling and processing techniques as well as data from the actual samples themselves. Without QC data, environmental sample data cannot be adequately interpreted because the errors associated with the sample data are unknown. The various types of QC samples collected by a USGS Water Science Center are described in the following section. Procedures have been established for the storage of water-quality-

control data within the USGS. These procedures allow for storage of all derived QC data and are identified so that they can be related to corresponding environmental samples. These data are not presented in this report but are available from the USGS Water Science Center.

Blank Samples

Blank samples are collected and analyzed to ensure that environmental samples have not been contaminated in the overall data-collection process. The blank solution used to develop specific types of blank samples is a solution that is free of the analytes of interest. Any measured value signal in a blank sample for an analyte (a specific component measured in a chemical analysis) that was absent in the blank solution is believed to be due to contamination. Many types of blank samples are possible; each is designed to segregate a different part of the overall data-collection process. The types of blank samples collected by this USGS Water Science Center are:

Field blank—A blank solution that is subjected to all aspects of sample collection, field processing preservation, transportation, and laboratory handling as an environmental sample.

Trip blank—A blank solution that is put in the same type of bottle used for an environmental sample and kept with the set of sample bottles before and after sample collection.

Equipment blank—A blank solution that is processed through all equipment used for collecting and processing an environmental sample (similar to a field blank but normally done in the more controlled conditions of the office).

Sampler blank—A blank solution that is poured or pumped through the same field sampler used for collecting an environmental sample.

Filter blank—A blank solution that is filtered in the same manner and through the same filter apparatus used for an environmental sample.

Splitter blank—A blank solution that is mixed and separated using a field splitter in the same manner and through the same apparatus used for an environmental sample.

Preservation blank—A blank solution that is treated with the sampler preservatives used for an environmental sample.

Reference Samples

Reference material is a solution or material prepared by a laboratory. The reference material composition is certified for one or more properties so that it can be used to assess a measurement method. Samples of reference material are submitted for analysis to ensure that an analytical method is accurate for the known properties of the reference material. Generally, the selected reference material properties are similar to the environmental sample properties.

Replicate Samples

Replicate samples are a set of environmental samples collected in a manner such that the samples are thought to be essentially identical in composition. Replicate is the general case for which a duplicate is the special case consisting of two samples. Replicate samples are collected and analyzed to establish the amount of variability in the data contributed by some part of the collection and analytical process. Many types of replicate samples are possible, each of which may yield slightly different results in a dynamic hydrologic setting, such as a flowing stream. The types of replicate samples collected in this district are:

Concurrent samples—A type of replicate sample in which the samples are collected simultaneously with two or more samplers or by using one sampler and alternating the collection of samples into two or more compositing containers.

Sequential samples—A type of replicate sample in which the samples are collected one after the other, typically over a short time.

Split sample—A type of replicate sample in which a sample is split into subsamples, each subsample contemporaneous in time and space.

Spike Samples

Spike samples are samples to which known quantities of a solution with one or more well-established analyte concentrations have been added. These samples are analyzed to determine the extent of matrix interference or degradation on the analyte concentration during sample processing and analysis.