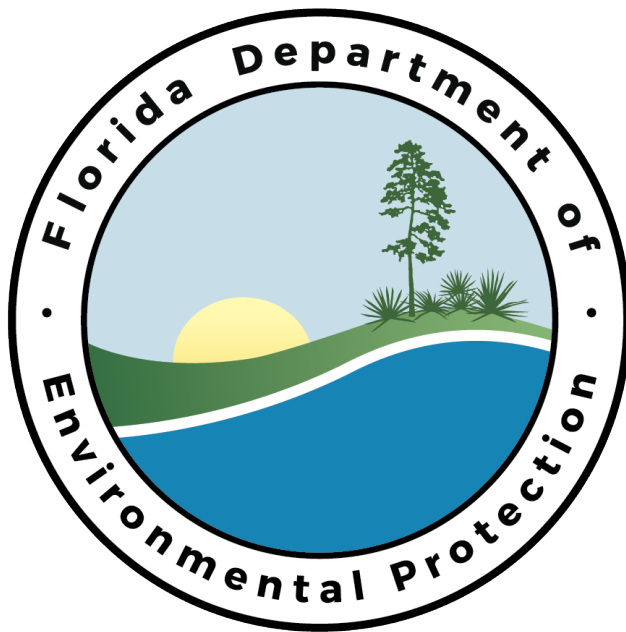




Quality Plan for [Name of Unit]

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

[Date]

Signature Page

The undersigned have read and understood this Quality Plan, are charged with managing and improving the quality system, and are responsible for ensuring that all staff properly execute the procedures discussed in the plan.

X

Administrator

X

Manager

X

Supervisor

X

Quality Assurance Officer

[other signatures]

Introduction

The DEP Quality Assurance (QA) program involves the implementation of a management system (planning, review, training, and assessment) to ensure that data collection, generation, interpretation, reporting, evaluation and archiving are of sufficient quality to support Department decisions. The effectiveness of our QA program is dependent upon the actions of all DEP staff, from “front line” employees to management, meaning QA is a function distributed throughout our organization. One aspect of our program is to ensure that Department QA activities are carried out according to commitments made to the Environmental Protection Agency as enumerated in the DEP Quality Management Plan (QMP) (Revision 8, March 2018).

The DEP Secretary is committed to implementation of the quality assurance requirements in the QMP and as authorized at Section 403.0623, F.S., and Chapter 62-160, F.A.C. (the DEP QA Rule). It is the Secretary's intent to carry out these obligations and requirements as described in the Department's QA Directive, Directive 972 (Revision 11/1/2016).

In order to execute the components of the DEP QA Directive, the **[PROGRAM or Organizational Unit]** has developed a quality system. This document describes the steps we take to ensure the scientific and legal defensibility of environmental data we generate or use. It details the process of planning, training, execution, assessment and corrective action we undertake to ensure that environmental data meets our established quality criteria.

Basic Elements of Our Quality Plan

Our Quality Plan explains both the process and criteria by which the quality system is managed. The plan is utilized as an instrument of internal communication to inform our staff of current and future quality assurance activities. It discusses how specific QA duties are assigned to responsible staff. We will revise our Quality Plan as needed, and will ensure the consistent application of procedures and criteria for the generation or use of our environmental data. The Quality Plan will also be used as a training document for new staff and as a reference for experienced personnel. The plan and its revisions also serve as an archival record of our formal quality system.

The elements of our plan are consistent with the Department's QMP, QA Directive, and QA Rule (Chapter 62-160, F.A.C.). **[In addition, we ensure that our plan for all sampling activities, including field-meter testing, is consistent with DEP SOP FA 3300.]** Our plan addresses all activities associated with **[sampling, field testing, lab analysis and data review of any**

type, including those activities associated with database construction and management]. Our plan also discusses how decisions about data use are made based on data quality assessments.

Where appropriate, we cite existing internal and external documents, including training manuals, guidance documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), rules, tables, etc. **[Cite other documents where applicable throughout the quality plan]**

We expect all staff to read, understand, and follow the procedures and criteria as discussed in this plan, and to carry out their assigned responsibilities for effective utilization of our quality system.

Policy Statement

It is our unit's policy to:

- Use scientifically valid and legally defensible data for our decisions affecting protection of the environment.
- Have and implement the Quality System described in this document.
- Adaptively manage our Quality System to be consistent with provisions of the DEP QMP.
- Ensure that each individual is properly trained to execute their assigned functions.
- Implement procedures to evaluate the quality of the data we use and to implement corrective actions when data do not meet our Data Quality Objectives.
- Periodically audit the performance and record-keeping practices of data generators we have responsibility for.
- Implement quality assurance procedures for the management of our data repositories.
- Perform a yearly systematic assessment of our quality assurance activities, including any corrective actions, with the findings submitted to the Aquatic Ecology and Quality Assurance Section.

Ethics

All employees of the DEP **[name of Unit]** are held to high professional ethical standards in the performance of their duties. All employees are required to read, understand and sign an 'Ethics Statement' attesting to their commitment to honesty and integrity in performance of their duties. In addition, all employees are required to attend an annual ethics training class. Improper, unethical or illegal actions will be dealt with according to the published Administrative Directives of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Organization and Responsibilities [see Sampling Design and Procedures below, if applicable]

Our unit resides within the **[Division, Bureau, Section]**.

The function of our unit is to **[describe]**.

Responsibilities for existing staff **[are as follows:]**

Our Quality Assurance Officer (QAO) **[name]** coordinates and participates in the quality evaluation of program data and provides oversight to ensure that our staff perform their QA functions. The QA Officer may delegate some responsibilities to properly trained and qualified staff, when appropriate. The QAO conducts systems audits of internal and external data generators (lab and field) and conducts sampling performance audits. The QAO also ensures that corrective actions are implemented for data non-conformance incidents as determined by evaluation of the data against our program's Data Quality Objectives. Additionally, the QAO assists program managers in the development of the Quality System and other logistical aspects of its implementation, such as coordinating associated training needs.

Our QAO documents all program QA activities, including training, audits and corrective actions and provides this information to the DEP Aquatic Ecology and Quality Assurance Section on a periodic basis. **[The QAO also:]**

Our program staff routinely carry out the following duties involving **[data collection, data usability evaluation, data interpretation]**, and the generation of DEP work products in a manner that ensures scientific defensibility and adherence to DEP rules and policies. **[Elaborate]**

Staff evaluate program data using program Data Quality Objectives (DQOs) and Data Quality Indicators (DQIs) and implement corrective actions as directed by the Quality Assurance Officer. A list of our DQOs and DQIs is found in **[Figure 2]**.

[Staff also perform the following according to the procedures discussed below:

- **Review proposed work for conformance with quality criteria**
- **Review and evaluate data**
- **Interpret data or determine compliance with permits and rules**
- **Check calculations**
- **Review documents for errors and completeness**
- **Other]**

[Elaborate on all activities]

Program staff provide feedback to the program Quality Assurance Officer for improving the program quality system.

- **[Name]** acts as liaison with other units, data providers, data consumers or other external parties concerning QA matters.
- **[Name]** answers public or external technical inquiries about data interpretation, approved procedures, suspected QA problems, site-specific issues, etc.

Our unit's management **[names]** ensure that this quality system is fully operational within our program, designates our Quality Assurance Officer, and provides general oversight. These managers also evaluate the above Data Quality Objectives and Data Quality Indicators to ensure they meet our program's needs, and periodically evaluate the effectiveness of staff's data quality activities, including reviewing audit results. These managers evaluate corrective action policies and procedures to be implemented when data do not meet program Data Quality Objectives. Our managers discuss audit results with the QA Officer, review the annual Quality Assurance Report to the Secretary, and discuss findings with the QA Officer. **[Elaborate]. [Management also:]**

An organizational chart is presented in **[Figure 1]** below.

Training

All personnel are properly trained to perform their duties. Supervisors periodically assess whether our staff performance conforms with the policies and procedures of our unit.

Our training procedures **[consist of:]**

- **Training for specific QA functions**
 - **Review of ethics policy with QA Officer**
 - **Specific training materials for routine functions and designated QA activities**
 - **Refresher trainings or delivery of updated information**
 - **Evaluation of effectiveness of training for each staff member**
- [Elaborate on all activities]**

Sampling Design and Procedures

Successful implementation of our program relies on valid data, which begins with proper sampling. Therefore, our unit performs the following activities concerning sampling [if applicable]:

- **[Name] designs sampling plans.**
- **[Name] prepares QA plans and SOPs**
- **[Name] reviews procedures and methods for compliance with QA plans and requirements**
- **[Name] handles requests for use of alternative, new or modified sampling procedures or lab methods**
- **[Name] manages or conducts sampling, field-testing and associated support operations**
- **[Name] coordinates data reviews, sampling activities or other QA tasks for timely completion**
- **[Elaborate on any of these above.]**

Data Review

Our program understands the need to evaluate the quality and usefulness of environmental data prior to making decisions. We conduct the following review procedures to **determine the usability of data for determination of compliance with permits or rules, etc.** These procedures are based on our established Data Quality Objectives and Data Quality Indicators, and incorporate the concepts and criteria found in DEP's "Process for Assessing Data Usability", DEP-EA-001/07.

An example table of data acceptability criteria is available upon request.

Elaborate.

Documentation

Since accurate documentation is an important factor for determining the success of QA activities, our unit carries out the following record-keeping procedures for the indicated activities to ensure appropriate documentation:

- **Sampling,**
- **field-testing,**
- **data review,**
- **calculation checks,**
- **data archiving,**
- **checks of database entries**
- **Document control and maintenance**
- **Record generation, retention, and storage procedures**

Contract Management

Our program ensures that the DEP contracts that we administer are properly managed to assure appropriate data quality. We attach either the Standard or Research QA Exhibit to any agreement that includes sample collection or analysis and requiring a QA Plan as a deliverable. As such, we conduct the following activities related to contract development and review:

- **Description of process for review of contracts, work plans, and QA plans for sampling and analysis tasks, etc. [Elaborate]**

Audits and Corrective Actions

Audits provide objective feedback concerning the effectiveness of our program's quality system and may identify areas in need of improvement. Therefore, our unit performs the following activities as discussed below:

- **Conducts [X] audits per year and compiles audit reports**
- **Handles complaints and other reports received from data users and the public concerning data quality**
- **Reports exceptions to established procedures and criteria**
- **Devises and implements corrective actions for problems with procedures, data reviews, etc**

[Elaborate on all activities]

Report Compilation

To provide the Secretary with information regarding DEP's ongoing QA efforts, our unit describes and compiles the results of all appropriate QA activities, and relays it to the Aquatic Ecology and Quality Assurance Section for an annual report.

Future adaptive management concerning our QA program is based on findings from audits and data reviews, **[and includes:]**