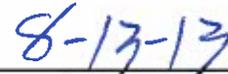


APPROVED:



Marc Daily, Interim Executive Director



DATE

PURPOSE

This policy establishes the Puget Sound Partnership's Quality Assurance (QA) Program. The QA Program will ensure that the data the agency uses in its decision-making processes will have known and documented quality and will be used appropriately.

This policy applies to all employees of the Puget Sound Partnership, and its contractors, who collect new data, analyze existing data, or conduct modeling related to the Puget Sound ecosystem and its recovery. This policy applies to data related to biophysical and social aspects of the ecosystem, performance, and management and policy issues.

DEFINITIONS

Quality Management System (QMS): The means by which an organization manages the quality of its primary business functions and products in a systematic and organized manner.

Quality Management Plan (QMP): A plan that is unique to an organization and describes the policies, management controls and technical processes necessary to plan, implement, document, and assess the effectiveness of its Quality Management System.

Quality Assurance (QA): The integrated program for assuring the reliability and quality of environmental or other types of data.

Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP): A plan that documents the planning, implementation, and assessment procedures for projects that include collection and analysis of environmental data, or environmental monitoring, or both, as well as any specific quality assurance and quality control activities.

Environmental data is data measuring:

- physical things (e.g., current, flow, changing locations of streams, water depths, grain size & sediment, streambeds)
- chemistry
- biological parameters

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QMP

The agency's formal Quality Management System will be recorded in the agency's QMP. The QMP shall be consistent with US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) guidance, and shall be updated every 5 years, or as needed.

GUIDELINES FOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

The scientific and technical works produced and disseminated by the Partnership vary in scope, scale, objectives, and influence. Consequently, scientific reviews at the Partnership go beyond the review of documents, technical reports, and scientific journal articles. Scientific reviews are not restricted solely to the penultimate version of products but can also occur during the development of products. The agency's expectations and standards for scientific review are recorded in "The Puget Sound Partnership's Guidelines for Scientific Review." (Approved by the Science Panel on January 25, 2012 or any subsequent revisions that are approved by the Science Panel.)

QUALITY ASSURANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Puget Sound Partnership's Executive Director designates the agency's Quality Assurance Officer. The QA Officer provides direction and agency oversight of all quality assurance matters. Technical assistance on issues of quality assurance shall initially be provided by Ecology's National Estuary Program Quality Coordinator.

Program Directors of all Partnership programs (e.g., Science, Performance Management) must each designate a Quality Assurance Coordinator to provide QA support and oversight within their program.

The QMP shall describe the responsibilities of all QA staff in more detail.

QAPPs

A QAPP is prepared for each study or other activity that collects or analyzes environmental data. It will be prepared by agency staff or by project contractors, as appropriate. The QAPP shall meet all EPA requirements and/or follow Ecology guidelines as described in the QMP.

All work funded by EPA that involves the acquisition of new environmental data, analysis of existing environmental data, or modeling studies incorporating environmental data must have an approved QAPP. For projects funded by other sources, the project manager can develop a QAPP at the discretion of the QA Officer.

The QAPP lists the objectives of the study/activity; identifies the data needed to achieve those objectives; and describes the sampling, measurement, quality control, and data assessment procedures needed to obtain the data. The size and complexity of the QAPP will be proportionate to the magnitude, complexity, and potential implications of the study.

QAPPs shall be developed, reviewed, and approved as specified in the QMP, *before* data collection, data analysis, or modeling activity begins. QAPPs that involve field work or analysis of environmental samples shall comply with EPA's 2011 *Policy to Assure Competency of Laboratories, Field Sampling, and Other Organizations Generating Environmental Measurement Data under Agency-Funded Acquisitions*. QAPPs shall describe methods and procedures in sufficient detail such that repeating the activities and tasks would yield outcomes that meet the study's objectives for data quality.

PROJECT PLANS FOR OTHER TYPES OF DATA

Studies that involve other types of data (e.g., social aspects of the ecosystem, performance) do not fall under the QAPP if they do not involve the collection or analysis of environmental data. However, since these data still have significant impact on the decision-making process of the agency, the QA Officer has discretion to request that a project manager develop a Project Plan to address quality. As with the QAPP, the Project Plan lists the objectives of the study/activity; identifies the data needed to achieve those objectives; and describes the sampling, measurement, quality control, and data assessment procedures needed to obtain the data and develop appropriate results and conclusions. The size and complexity of the Project Plan will be proportionate to the magnitude, complexity, and potential implications of the study. Project Plans will be described in further detail in the QMP.

QUALITY ASSURANCE TRAINING FOR AGENCY STAFF

The QA Officer will coordinate quality assurance training for Partnership staff. Training details will be described within the QMP.

