



United States Department of the Interior

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, VA 20192

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 412

June 22, 2016

OFFICE OF WATER QUALITY TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 2016.07

SUBJECT: Revision of terminology for Data-Quality Indicator Codes in NWIS 5.2

This technical memorandum announces revisions to some of the terminology used for data-quality indicator (DQI) codes, which are used in the processing of data in the Water-Quality System ([QWDATA](#)) of the National Water Information System (NWIS) Release 5.2 (Table 1). The existing terminology for DQI codes has been in use since the addition of the DQI code in QWDATA, which was announced in [Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2002.15](#). The Office of Water Quality determined that the use of “presumed satisfactory” (DQI code=S) is inconsistent with the public language that is used by NWISWeb and in Fundamental Science Practices (FSP), which both use “provisional” to describe data that are released before final approval. For reviewed data (DQI code=R or O), the term “approved” is more consistent with FSP language than “accepted.” The revision of the DQI code terminology will be available in NWIS as part of the 2016 summer reference list update.

Table 1. Revised terminology for data-quality indicator (DQI) codes. Table replaces Table 2 in Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2002.15.

[Terminology changes in bold.]

DQI Code	Old Description	Revised Description
A	Historical data	Historical data
S	Presumed satisfactory	Provisional
I	Awaiting review	Awaiting review
R	Reviewed and accepted	Reviewed and approved
Q	Reviewed and rejected	Reviewed and rejected
P	Proprietary, not reviewed	Proprietary, not reviewed
O	Proprietary, reviewed and accepted	Proprietary, reviewed and approved
X	Proprietary, reviewed and rejected	Proprietary, reviewed and rejected
U	Research or unapproved method or laboratory	Research or unapproved method or laboratory

The DQI code of “S” is used during the default processing (including manual and batch processes) of field measurements and laboratory constituents into QWDATA. Data coded with a DQI of “S” generally are sent to NWISWeb on a nightly basis, to provide relevant and timely

scientific information to the Nation and for collaborating with others in the scientific community as described in [Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2007.03](#). The “S” was originally termed “presumed satisfactory” because Water Mission Area data undergo some level of data review before being entered into QWDATA. Initial reviews of data occur during checking of field measurements as well as during the laboratory analytical determination of constituents. “Presumed satisfactory” has always been used to indicate that data need further review and are subject to change; in other words, “presumed satisfactory” has always meant “provisional.” After data-quality checks are completed by the Water Science Center, DQI codes are updated to indicate the final status of the data as approved or rejected. Water Science Centers are referred to [Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2012.03](#) for policies on water-quality data review.

Donna N. Myers
Chief, Office of Water Quality

This memorandum supercedes the following Office of Water Quality Technical Memoranda 2002.15 (Table 2 only).

Distribution: All WMA Employees

REFERENCES

Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum, 2012.03, Update of Policy on Review and Publication of Discrete Water Data, April 24, 2012, accessible at <http://water.usgs.gov/admin/memo/QW/qw12.03.pdf>

Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2007.03, Changes to the NWISWeb Aggregation and Display of Water-Quality Data, accessible at <http://water.usgs.gov/admin/memo/QW/qw07.03.html>

Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2002.15, Subject: Use of the new data-quality-indicator (DQI) field in NWIS 4_1, accessible at <http://water.usgs.gov/admin/memo/QW/qw02.15.pdf>