



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, Virginia 20192

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 150

Sunset Date: June 2020

December 08, 2016

Memorandum

Distribution: GS-W A, GS-W B, GS-W WSC Directors, GS-RD, GS-DO AD

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Associate Director for Water

WATER MISSION AREA POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 2017.02

Subject: PROGRAMS AND PLANS--Policy and Guidelines for Accounting Structure of Data Collection Projects and Accounts

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide policy and guidance to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Science Centers (Centers) regarding their roles and responsibilities in the use of data collection projects and accounts.

Water Resources Data Collection

Water resources monitoring and data collection on behalf of the nation has long been recognized as a critical function of the USGS Water Mission Area (WMA). Broad, well-balanced, integrated data collection involving surface water, groundwater, and water quality supports current and future water management and availability studies. As such many Congressional appropriations are specifically requested for and directed to assuring stable, scientifically relevant, nationwide data collection. Tracking and reporting on these appropriations is a fundamental obligation of WMA in accordance with appropriations law.

Historically, WMA has met appropriations tracking requirements through the establishment and funding of standardized Center-level data collection projects, tasks, and accounts including; Surface Water (001), Groundwater (002), Water Quality (003) and Sediment (004). In recent years these standardized accounting practices have diverged to the point where it is difficult to meet minimal, legally required Congressional reporting requirements.

This policy memo reaffirms the responsibility of Centers to establish and maintain these standardized accounting practices and establishes a transition period for full implementation.

Specific Guidance

1) Each Center will, at a minimum, maintain a data collection project in BASIS+ with specific tasks. Task 1 – surface water / precipitation data collection, Task 2 – groundwater data collection, Task 3 – water-quality data collection and Task 4 – sediment data collection. Congressional appropriations reporting will be completed at the task level. Accounts will be established and funded according to the task they are under and will be as granular as necessary to meet specific aggregation (complex, fund-split accounts), low burden, and customer billing requirements. Previously recommended account numbering conventions remain, for example the primary account under each task should follow this convention:

GC.17.ZZ00.00100.00 Surface Water Data Collection
GC.17.ZZ00.00200.00 Groundwater Data Collection
GC.17.ZZ00.00300.00 Water Quality Data Collection
GC.17.ZZ00.00400.00 Sediment Data Collection.

Deviations to account numbering schemes are allowed to accommodate specific needs related to Center size, diversity of program and organizational structure, as long as the integrity of data collection being accounted for at the task level remains intact. When necessary, sub-accounts are also allowed to facilitate local budgeting practices, assuring funding of the parent account follows along with the task it is established under.

2) Funding for hydrologic studies must not be attached to the Center data collection project and associated tasks. Instead accounts should be established and funded under the appropriate scientific project and task they are associated with.

All Centers must fully implement these standardized accounting practices no later than October 2017 (FY2018), however, they should immediately begin evaluating their program and make any necessary transition plans as soon as possible.

Contacts and Training

The integrated nature of this policy, involving business, research, and data collection, will require input, coordination, and training with numerous levels of the organization. Communications and training will occur through regional / national Administrative meetings; National Data Conferences; and Surface water, Groundwater, and Water Quality meetings as appropriate. As necessary local, regional and national conference calls will be scheduled.

Specific questions can be directed through the WMA Business Operations Unit or Water Science Field Team.

Summary

Appropriation law concerns have dictated that the USGS return to standardized accounting practices in a way that Congressional appropriations can be efficiently shown as being spent for their intended purpose. Additional tracking and reporting is necessary to assure our operations are efficient and integrated across business, science and data collection activities. The policy outlined here ensures USGS meets legally required obligations while also efficiently executing our overall mission.

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