



February 27, 2015

## Office of Water Quality Water-Quality Information Note 2015.05

### Subject: NWIS Parameter Code Names: Special Characters and Italics

To assist USGS authors and report reviewers with proper formatting of technical terms, the Office of Water Quality (OWQ) has created a reference that lists NWIS parameter names with correctly formatted special characters and symbols. A tip sheet describing some of the most common uses of special characters and symbols in chemical names is also included.

Chemical names, microbiology genus and species names, and other technical terms may include italics, Greek letters, subscripts, superscripts, and other unusual formatting, characters, and symbols. These special elements convey meaning that can be changed or lost if the proper formatting is not preserved. Parameter names taken directly from NWIS are lacking in the proper use of these formatting elements because NWIS is currently limited to ASCII characters.

To aid USGS authors in the use of proper notation in publications, the OWQ has posted a spreadsheet<sup>1</sup> (<http://water.usgs.gov/usgs/owq/pcode/names.html>) that shows how the special characters in NWIS parameter names should appear in reports. The spreadsheet lists chemical, radiation, microbiology, and other parameter codes that use special characters or formatting (population count parameter codes from 92000 to 98346 are excluded). These parameter names were formatted using the guidelines in the third edition of the American Chemical Society Style Guide<sup>2</sup>. The spreadsheet uses 12-point Times New Roman to facilitate copying and pasting into USGS reports. A tip sheet with examples is also included that identifies some of the more common errors in chemical nomenclature. The spreadsheet will be updated as the NWIS reference lists are updated.

Chemical nomenclature rules can result in more than one valid name for some chemicals. Authors may have good reasons for choosing specific names among the possible chemical names and this information note does not imply a policy that USGS authors must use the NWIS names in their publications. However, this information note encourages authors to use valid chemical names that are correctly formatted.

Questions about the formatting used for the NWIS Parameter Code names should be directed to Ken Pearsall ([pearsall@usgs.gov](mailto:pearsall@usgs.gov)).

<sup>1</sup>This spreadsheet contains CAS Registry Number<sup>®</sup> identifiers, which are a Registered Trademark of the American Chemical Society. CAS recommends the verification of the CASRNs through CAS Client Services<sup>SM</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Coghill, A.M., and Garson, L.R., eds., 2006, The ACS style guide--Effective communication of scientific information (3d ed.): New York, Oxford University Press, 430 p.

WaQI Notes are archived on the Office of Water Quality web site, <http://water.usgs.gov/usgs/owq/WaQI/index.html>

Signed,

USGS Office of Water Quality 2/27/2015

Distribution: All WMA Employees