



NHDES Environmental Data¹ Quality Policy

BACKGROUND: The mission of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is to help sustain a high quality of life for all citizens by protecting and restoring the environment and public health in New Hampshire. In carrying out its mission, NHDES relies upon environmental data that enable it to better evaluate existing environmental conditions, to identify and understand areas of concern, to assign responsibility for these areas, and to promote and enhance credible communication on environmental issues to a wide variety of audiences.

Environmental data are used for setting priorities and strategic direction, targeting inspections, measuring compliance, identifying violations, measuring progress and trends, measuring ecological health, and many other purposes. These data are critical because they can affect NHDES's direction and emphasis, determine whether an enforcement case will be successful, dictate which option will be followed to address a problem, document a problem, or demonstrate progress to the general public and the General Court.

KEY PURPOSE: The environmental data NHDES uses must be credible, of known quality, and the quality and quantity of these data must be appropriate for its intended uses. To accomplish this, everyone at NHDES must understand how their activities affect data quality issues, and all staff must know what they have to do to help produce quality data.

POLICY STATEMENT: The Department of Environmental Services will ensure, within its authority, that all of its programs deliver environmental data of known quality to allow all parties to make appropriate decisions about the environment in New Hampshire.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: NHDES's environmental data quality management efforts will follow written plans and guidance, which each program must generate. Copies of this policy will be provided to all staff via e-mail and will be placed on the NHDES Intranet. The *NHDES Quality Management Plan (QMP)* provides guidance for all NHDES programs. As described in the QMP, all programs managing environmental data will prepare written standard operating procedures for sampling, testing, gathering information on field conditions, checking and validating this information, and reviewing their own data quality systems.

All programs will ensure that the purpose of every data gathering effort is understood by their personnel. NHDES has assigned a Quality Assurance Manager, Assistant Quality Assurance Manager, and a Quality Assurance Team, comprised of representatives of programs throughout NHDES, to lead these efforts. All NHDES programs managing environmental data will have written data quality guidance, in accordance with the NHDES QMP.

The NHDES Quality Assurance (QA) System relies upon first-party audits in the form of annual QA Self-Audits, which are the primary reporting mechanism to be used by NHDES Program Managers. All NHDES programs managing environmental data (and meeting the reporting criteria outlined in the NHDES QMP), must conduct an annual review of their data quality systems, and report the results of that review, including recommendations and actions for improvements, to the Quality Assurance Manager by the requested annual deadline.

NOTE: This policy is subject to revision. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are familiar with the most recent policy.

Date First Established: June 2001

Date Revised: July 2022

¹ Any measurements or information that describe environmental processes, location or conditions; ecological or health effects and consequences; environmental modeling; or the performance of environmental technology.

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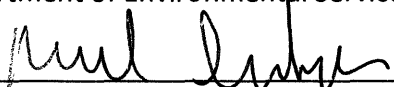
Approval Signatures

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N.H. Department of Environmental Services

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Date 7/21/22

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