

Quality Assurance Oversight Team (QAOT)

Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

September 2009

It is critical that the environmental/ecological monitoring and assessment data generated for the restoration of the Everglades as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) be able to withstand rigorous scrutiny. This means that data must be of known and documented quality. For CERP, achieving high-quality data is particularly challenging because data used for CERP are collected by many organizations for projects and programs whose monitoring activities may have different objectives. It is the role of the CERP Quality Assurance Oversight Team (QAOT) to provide quality assurance (QA) guidance at the program level to ensure data quality so that data collected for CERP can be merged to generate an overall picture of the current state of the Everglades system, and to track the ecological and hydrologic improvements that result from CERP projects that will span the next 30 years or more. The use of data with unknown, unequal, or untraceable quality could result in decision errors or legal challenges. Programmatic data quality will be achieved by systematically incorporating quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) into every aspect of data collection.

The QAOT was established by CERP Guidance Memorandum (CGM) 041 to provide guidance on monitoring procedures, QA/QC and data validation for CERP projects and to be the forum to develop consistency among the various entities involved with environmental monitoring, data quality and QA/QC processes.

However, each agency and individual involved with CERP monitoring must share responsibility for maintaining knowledge of the quality assurance system and for adhering to the procedures.

The best way to stay apprised is through the Quality Assurance System Requirements (QASR) manual, which lays out the protocols & procedures for data gathering activities for CERP in addressing the following areas:

- Water Quality Field Sampling
- Chemical Analysis & Laboratory Requirements
- Verification and Validation of Water Quality Data
- Hydrometeorological & Hydraulic Monitoring
- Soil and Sediment Characterization
- Biological Monitoring and Assessment
- Remote Sensing
- Information and Data Management
- Data Quality Evaluation and Assessment

More than 85% of the data currently collected for the CERP program are biological and ecological data. In order to assess the QA/QC procedures currently implemented for biological and ecological monitoring, a CERP systems-focused questionnaire was developed by the QAOT and the Assessment Team Co-chairs. The results were reported in the 2008 CERP Quality Assessment Report (QAR) and form the basis for identifying the QA/QC procedures currently being implemented for biological and ecological sampling. The 2008 QAR can be found on the QAOT website on EvergladesPlan.org.



When does a project delivery team (PDT) interact with the QAOT?

It is important that the QAOT review any and all monitoring plans for CERP Projects and Programs. The plans will be reviewed to ensure that the QASR protocols and procedures are incorporated into all CERP monitoring.

Overview of CGM 041

Agency Responsibility and Coordination for QA/QC & Data Validation for CERP Environmental Monitoring.

Effective Date:

November 19, 2003

Guidance:

The CGM shall govern all environmental QA/QC & data validation activities undertaken in conjunction with CERP activities. Project & program managers will incorporate the intent of this guidance into those contracts and projects to the greatest extent possible.

QAOT Membership:

The QAOT is a multi-agency team comprised of four to six standing members. The lead agencies are the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). Representatives from the following agencies are serving as standing members: USACE, SFWMD, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, U. S. Geological Survey, & U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For More Information

Visit our web site at

<http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/qaot.aspx>

Point of Contact

QAOT Co-Chairs

Ming Chen

SFWMD

561-682-6252

Debby Scerno

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

904-232-2805



CERP

Frequently Asked Questions about QAOT

Who are the QAOT?

The Quality Assurance Oversight Team is a multi agency group concerned with the quality and consistency of the data that CERP produces.

Why is the quality and consistency of the data important?

We need legally defensible data to support CERP and we need to be able to compare data across time.

Who does QAOT report to?

The CERP Design Coordination Team (DCT) which meets monthly to provide consistent and effective communication, coordination and issue resolution on projects included in the CERP Design Agreement between USACE and SFWMD.

Does QAOT have responsibility to the project delivery teams (PDTs) and Restoration Coordination & Verification (RECOVER)?

Yes, with respect to quality assurance issues.

What are some of the things that the QAOT can do for me?

- Provide a QASR; which is a manual for data gathering activities for CERP and documents methodologies so that efforts remain compatible as time progresses and participants change. http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/program_docs/qasr.aspx
- Conduct field WQ, hydrological and ecological monitoring QA assessments (within QAOT budget).
- Audit laboratories that work for CERP to ensure that laboratories are doing quality work (within QAOT budget).
- Review monitoring plans and scopes of work for quality assurance.
- Provide QAOs to PDT/RECOVER teams.

What is a QAO?

The Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs) are here to help the PDTs and RECOVER with quality assurance issues.

What kinds of things can a QAO do for my team?

- Help to formulate a scope of work / monitoring plan.
- Review data and reports for scope of work compliance.
- Review Quality Assurance Project Plans that contractors formulate.
- Help to review ADAPT/ADR libraries and deliverables.

When do I submit monitoring plans and scopes of work to the QAOT?

When the scope of work / monitoring plan is ready for PDT review, please send it to Mike Wright at mwright@sfwmd.gov and Lisa Gued at lisa.r.gued@usace.army.mil.

Do I still have to submit monitoring plans to RECOVER?

Yes. RECOVER reviews monitoring plans with respect to consistency with the objectives of the Monitoring and Assessment Plan (MAP); the QAOT reviews monitoring plans with respect to quality assurance issues.

What are ADAPT/ADR libraries and deliverables?

ADAPT/ADR libraries and deliverables are an electronic data package of chemistry data that is delivered by the laboratory or contractors. It ensures the correct and exact transmission of analytical data in a standardized format with quality control information.



Can we use ADAPT/ADR libraries and deliverables for ecological data?

No, at the present time ADAPT/ADR data submissions are only applicable to chemistry data.

What exactly are CGMs?

CGMs are CERP Guidance Memoranda – documentation of official guidance for CERP implementation.

http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/program_docs/cerp-guidance-memo.aspx.

What is CGM 040?

This "Project-level Water Quality and Hydrometeorologic Monitoring and Assessment" CGM provides guidance on how to address and incorporate monitoring and assessment activities thus ensuring consistency from project to project.

http://www.cerpzone.org/documents/cgm/CGM_040-01_Final_5-20-08.pdf.

What is CGM 041?

CGM 041 is entitled "Agency Responsibility and Coordination for Quality Assurance, Quality Control & Data Validation for CERP Environmental Monitoring". It defines the roles that QAOT provides for CERP.

http://www.cerpzone.org/documents/cgm/cgm_041.00.pdf

What is CGM 042?

CGM 042 is entitled "Toxic Substances Screening Process". It provides uniform screening to detect project-related impacts of toxic substances that USACE, SFWMD, and FDEP have agreed on. It defines a scheme of monitoring at each stage of a project.

<http://www.cerpzone.org/documents/cgm/Mem%20CGM%20042-00.pdf>.

How can I find out more information about CERP quality assurance?

Visit the web site:

<http://www.evergladesplan.org/pm/qaot.aspx>.

