QUALITY OF RIVERS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1976 WATER YEAR--BASED ON THE NATIONAL STREAM QUALITY ACCOUNTING NETWORK (NASQAN)

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Open-File Report 80-594

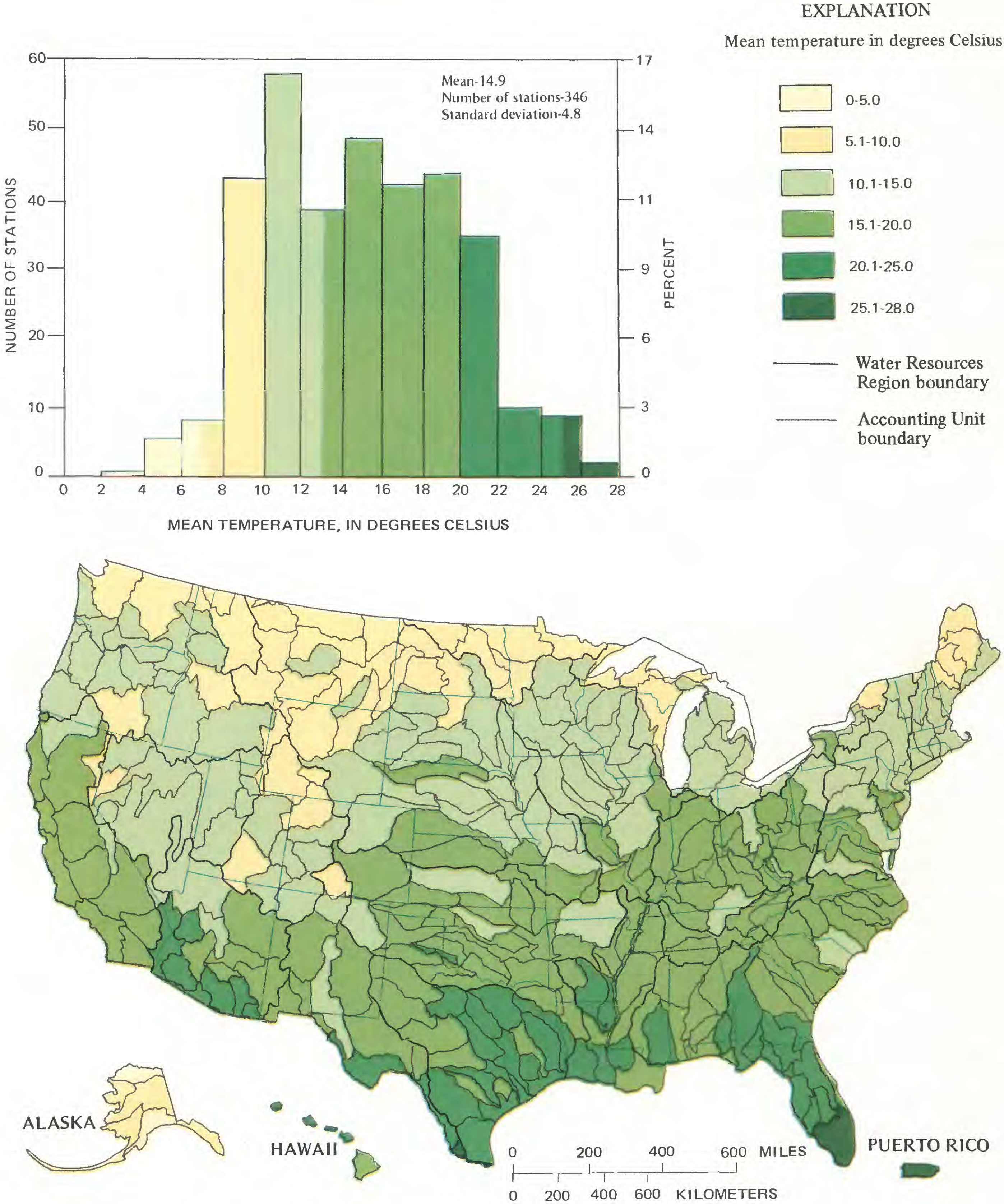
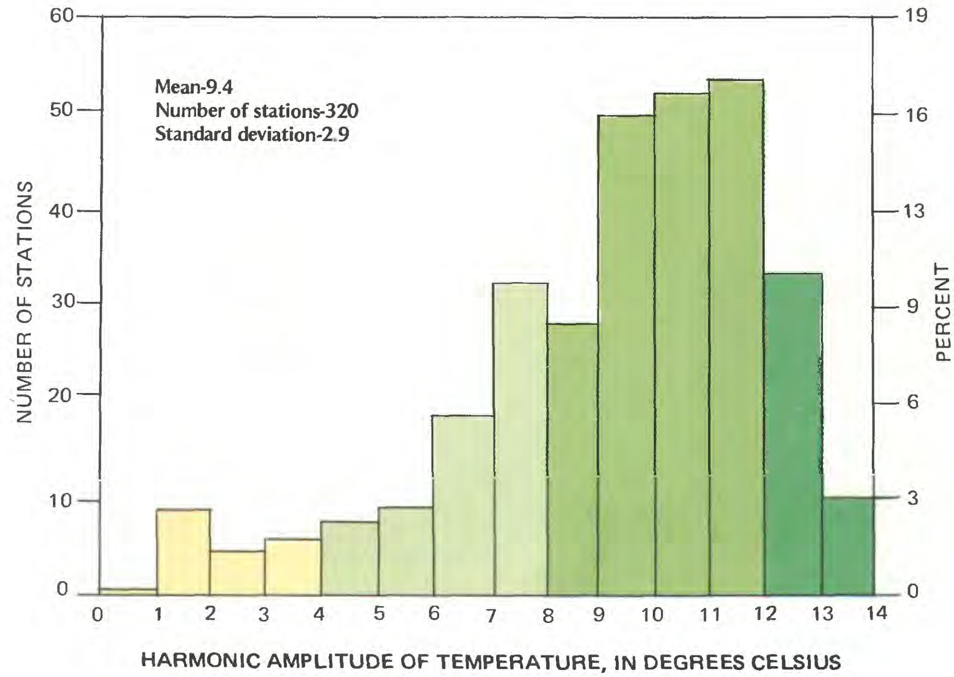


Figure 3. Annual mean temperature at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year.
Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.



EXPLANATION

Harmonic amplitude of temperature, in degrees Celsius

- No value
- 0.0-4.0
- 4.1-8.0
- 8.1-12.0
- 12.1-15.0

Water Resources Region boundary

Accounting Unit boundary

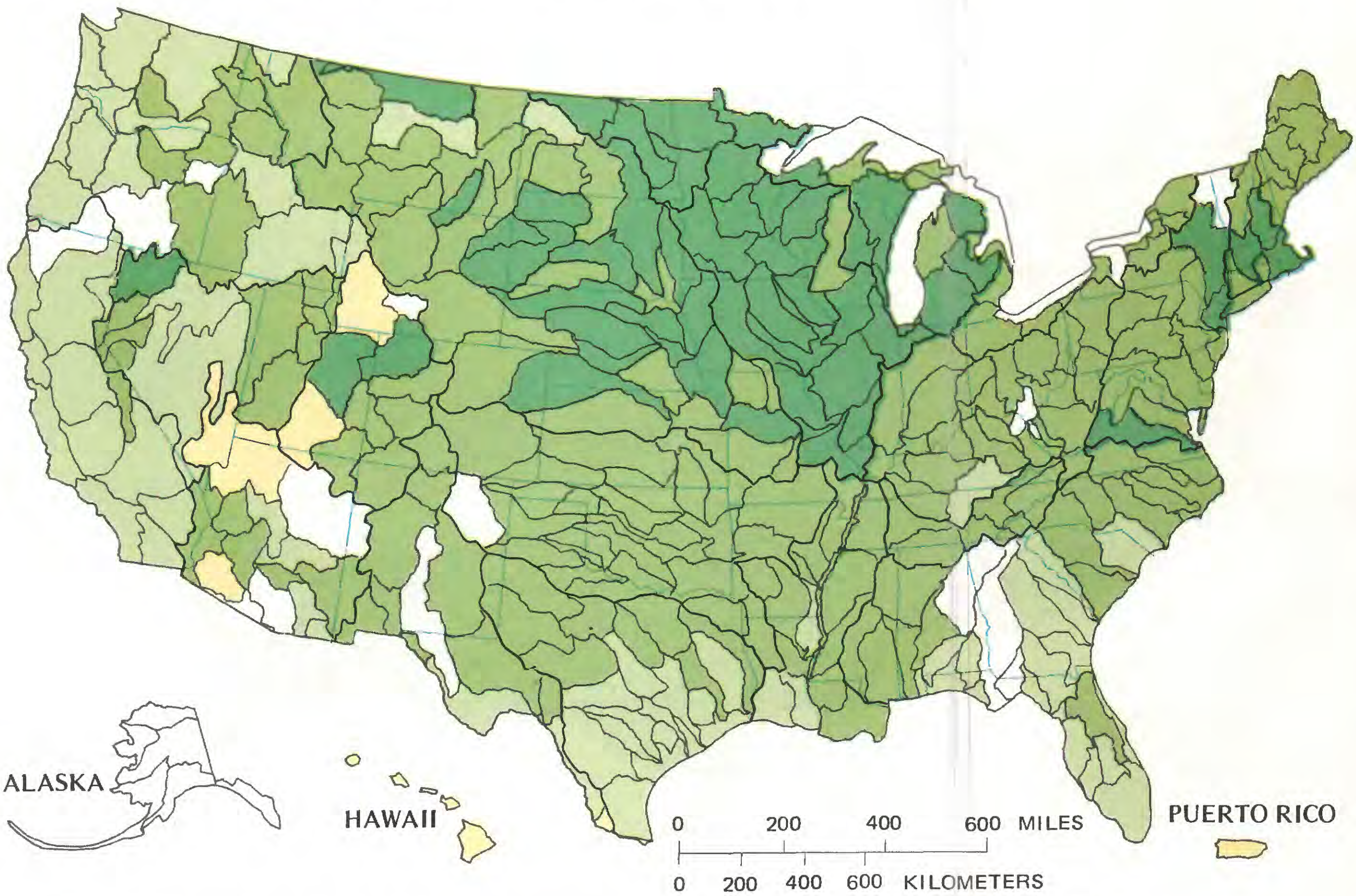


Figure 4. Harmonic amplitude of the stream temperature curve at NASQAN stations during the 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

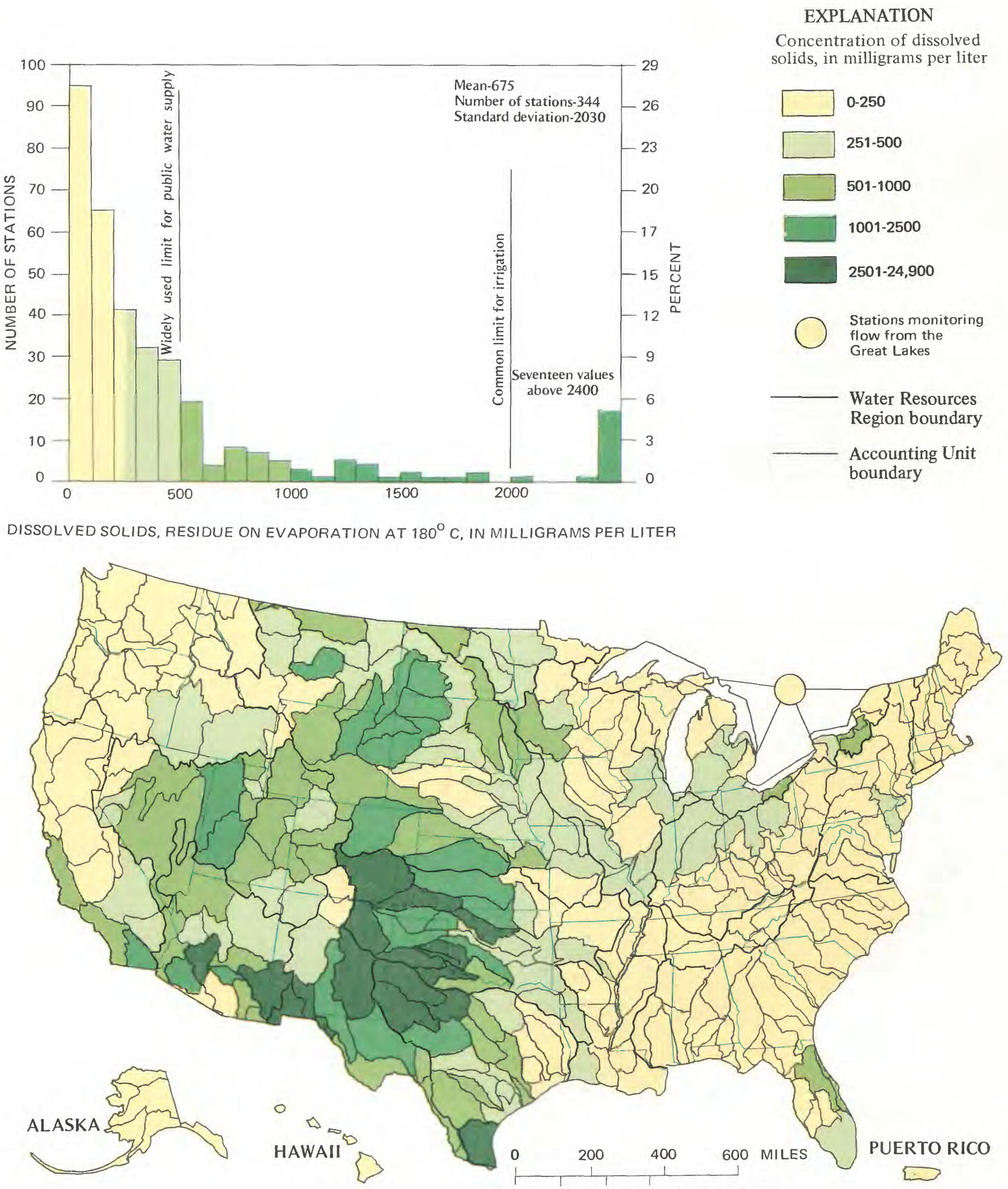


Figure 5. Mean concentration of dissolved solids measured as residue on evaporation (ROE) at 180° C at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

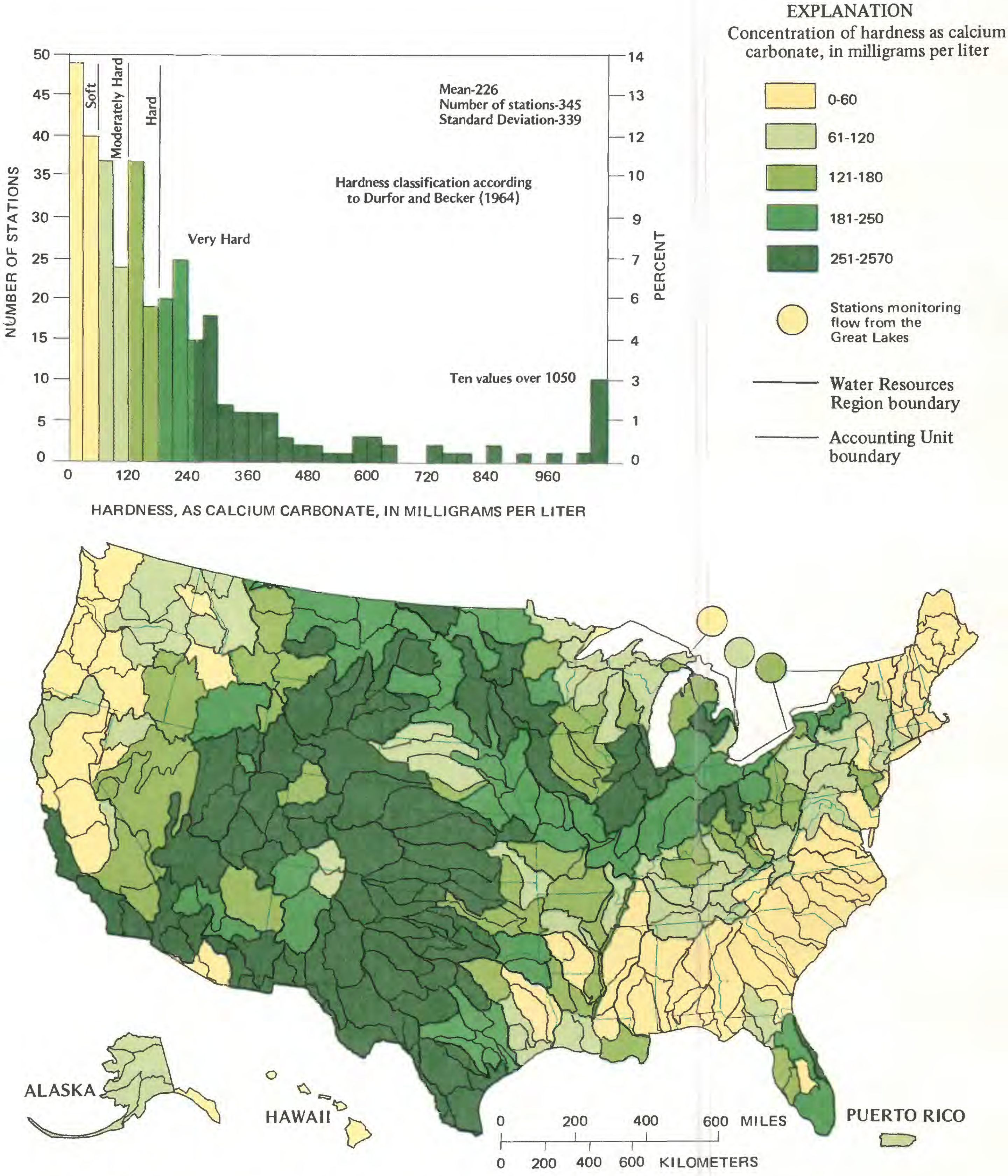


Figure 6. Mean concentration of hardness as calcium carbonate at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

Distribution patterns of hardness in the United States are shown on the map of accounting units at the bottom of figure 6. Softest waters were measured in streams of the New England, South Atlantic-Gulf, Pacific Northwest, California, and Hawaii Regions. Moderately hard waters were common in many of the streams of the Tennessee, Great Lakes, Pacific Northwest, and Alaska Regions. Hard and very hard waters were found in some of the streams in most of the regions throughout the country. Hardest waters (greater than 1,000 mg/L) were measured in streams in Texas, New Mexico, Kansas, Arizona, and southern California.

Chloride.--The presence of chloride can adversely affect taste in drinking water, and can cause corrosion and other problems in industrial water supplies. Water Quality Criteria 1972 (National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering, 1972) recommends that chloride in drinking water not exceed 250 mg/L, because of problems with taste.

Ranges of mean chloride concentrations at 345 stations during the 1976 water year are shown in the histogram at the top of figure 7. Most of the chloride concentrations represented in the figure are quite low--about two-thirds are less than 30 mg/L. The scale used in constructing the histogram does not permit many of the highest chloride concentrations to be represented-data from 29 stations with mean concentrations greater than 290 mg/L are lumped in the bar at the right edge of the histogram.

Distribution patterns of chloride concentrations are shown on the map at the bottom of figure 7. Mean concentrations exceeding 250 mg/L were measured in streams of the Texas-Gulf, Lower Mississippi, Arkansas-White-Red, Rio Grande, Great Basin, and Lower Colorado Regions and at one station in each of the South Atlantic-Gulf, Missouri, and California Regions. The highest mean concentration, 13,149 mg/L, was measured at the Salt Fork of the Brazos River in Texas (08082000). The mean chloride concentration was greater than 1,000 mg/L at 14 stations.

Sulfate.--Large concentrations of sulfate in drinking water are undesirable because of the laxative effects. A recommended limit of 250 mg/L is suggested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1977, p. 17146).

The distribution of sulfate concentrations in NASQAN streams is shown in the histogram at the top of figure 8. Mean concentrations of less than 50 mg/L were measured at about 56 percent of the NASQAN stations, and concentrations greater than the recommended drinking water limit of 250 mg/L were measured at about 14 percent of the stations. Mean sulfate concentrations of more than 2,100 mg/L were found at NASQAN stations on the Red River near Wayside, Texas (07297910), and the Pecos River at Red Bluff, New Mexico (08407500).

Distribution patterns of sulfate concentrations are shown on the map at the bottom of figure 8. Lowest concentrations were found in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic-Gulf, Pacific Northwest, Tennessee, Alaska, Hawaii, and Caribbean Regions. Moderate concentrations, less than the recommended limit of 250 mg/L, existed throughout most of the Midwest. Streams with mean sulfate concentrations in excess of 1,000 mg/L included the two streams mentioned above plus the Belle Fourche

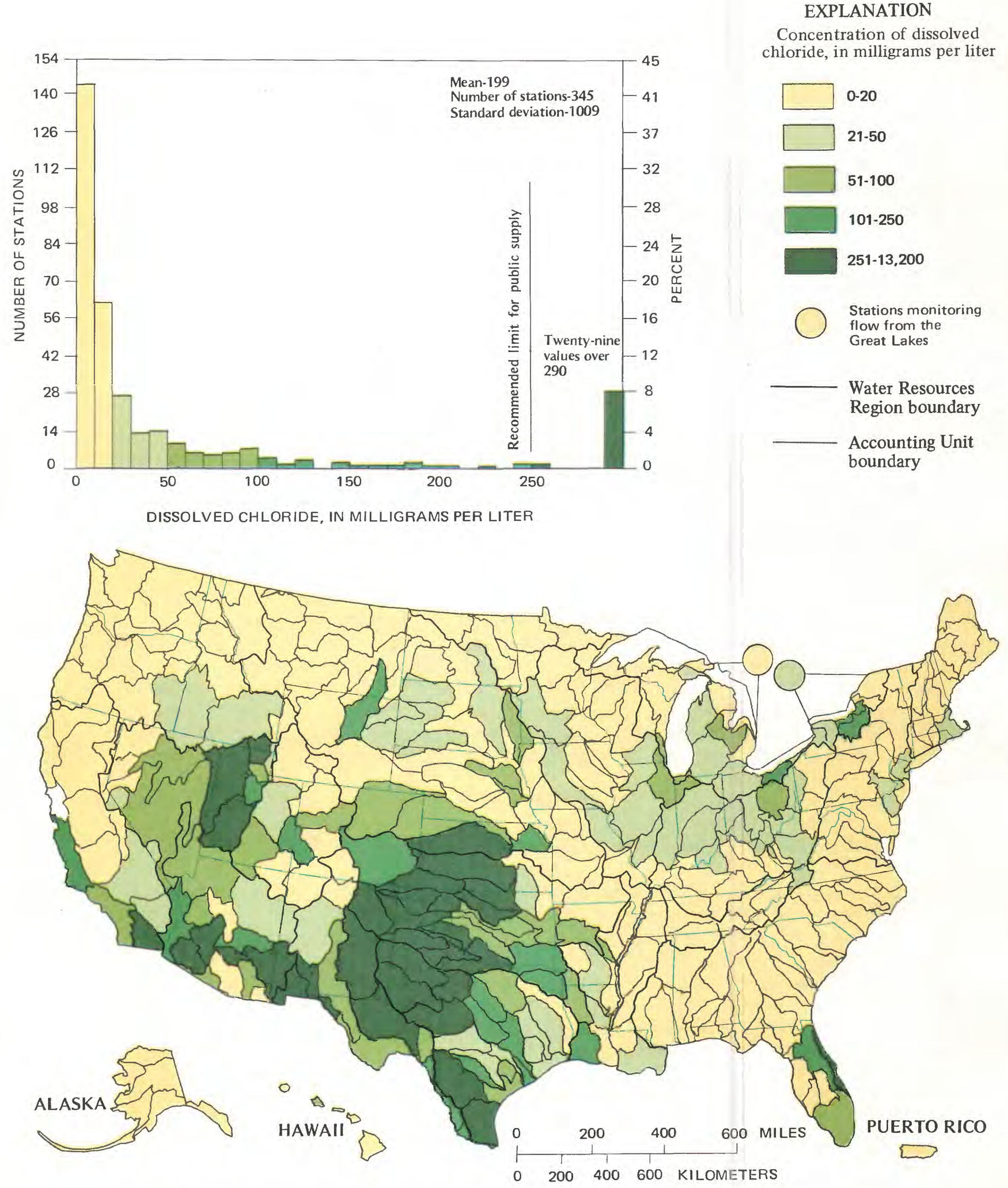


Figure 7. Mean concentration of dissolved chloride at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

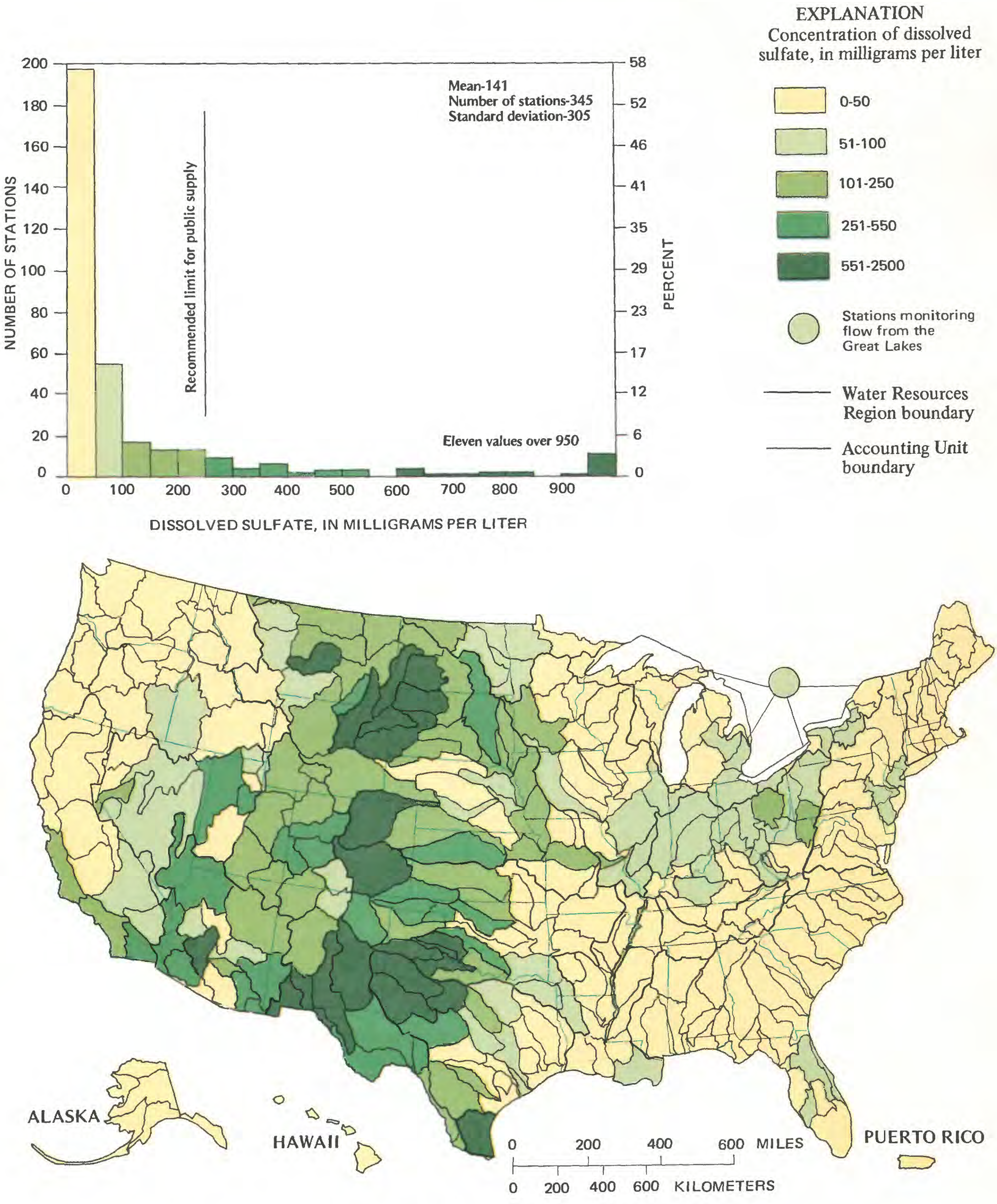


Figure 8. Mean concentration of dissolved sulfate at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

River in South Dakota (06438000), the Arkansas River near Coolidge in Kansas (07137500), and six streams in Texas: the Salt Fork Red River near Wellington (07300000), the Brazos River at Seymour (08082500), Beals Creek near Westbrook (08123800), Los Olmos Creek near Falfurrias (08212400), Red River near Burkburnett (07308500), and the Salt Fork Brazos River near Aspermont (08082000).

Alkalinity.--Information on the alkalinity of water is more of an indicator of the type of water than it is a means of judging suitability for most uses. The alkalinity determination is an indication of the concentrations of bicarbonates, carbonates, and hydroxides which tend to elevate the pH of water above a value of about 4.5; therefore, it is a measure of the base content of water, that is, the capability of water to neutralize acids. Alkalinity usually is measured directly, but it also can be estimated from concentrations of bicarbonate and carbonate by the relation:

$$\text{Alkalinity as } CaCO_3 = 50.04 \times [(\text{bicarbonate} \times 0.01639) + (\text{carbonate} \times 0.03323)]$$

All units are in milligrams per liter. This equation can be used to compute average alkalinity for NASQAN stations using the bicarbonate and carbonate data given in table 12.

A moderate amount of alkalinity is desirable in streams to prevent fluctuation of pH due to biological processes. Also, water with high alkalinity will more effectively resist alteration by addition of acid mine drainage or acid pollution than will waters with low alkalinity. Bicarbonate, which usually is the principal component in stream alkalinity, can limit a water's suitability for irrigation through induction of iron chlorosis in some plants at concentrations exceeding 600 mg/L (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1976a). Large concentrations of carbonate and bicarbonate also can harm boilers and water heaters, and can be detrimental to a number of industrial processes. For example, Quality Criteria for Water (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1976a) lists alkalinity maxima ranging from 50 to 500 mg/L for several industrial uses. It also lists a minimum alkalinity of 20 mg/L for protection of freshwater aquatic life.

Variations in alkalinity at NASQAN stations are shown by the histogram at the top of figure 9. The histogram is quite uniform, with about 99 percent of the NASQAN stations having concentrations less than 300 mg/L. The four highest values (over 300 mg/L) are lumped in the bar at the right edge of the histogram. The greatest mean alkalinity was 430 mg/L and the median was about 106 mg/L.

National patterns in alkalinity are shown on the map at the bottom of figure 9. Lowest alkalinities (poor buffering capacity) were found in some of the streams in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic-Gulf, Tennessee, Pacific Northwest, and Hawaii Regions; the same waters that contained small concentrations of dissolved solids. Moderate or high alkalinities are found in some streams of all the other Water Resource Regions.

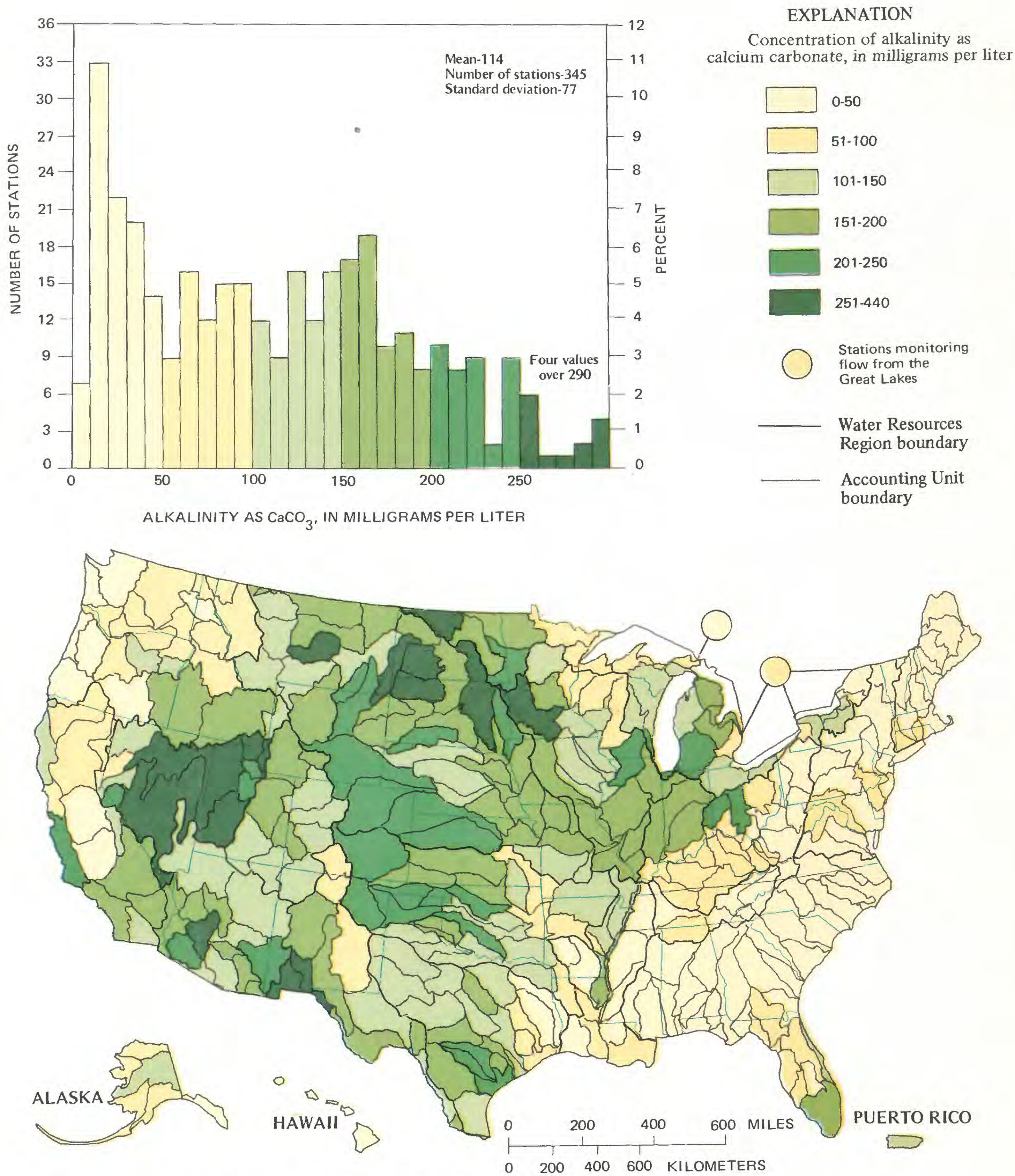


Figure 9. Mean alkalinity as calcium carbonate at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

Fluoride.--Small concentrations of fluoride (up to about 1 mg/L) in drinking water are considered to have a beneficial health effect through the reduction in the incidence of tooth decay. However, large concentrations of fluoride in the diet produce dental fluorosis--mottling and chipping of tooth enamel. Amounts of fluoride ingested through drinking water vary with the amount of water consumed, and the amounts consumed generally vary with the climate--people drink more where it is hot. Therefore, standards for the recommended maximum concentrations of fluoride in drinking water consider the annual average of maximum daily air temperature (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1975, p. 59570).

The histogram at the top of figure 10 summarizes the mean concentration of fluoride measured at NASQAN stations, and also summarizes the recommended maximum concentrations for drinking water as a function of air temperature. A recommended maximum concentration for livestock of 2.0 mg/L also is noted on the illustration. Figure 10 shows that over three-fourths of the streams have mean fluoride concentrations less than 0.5 mg/L, and only seven streams have concentrations greater than 1.4 mg/L.

Distribution patterns of fluoride concentration are shown on the map at the bottom of figure 10. Concentrations were less than 1 mg/L except in the Peace River at Arcadia, Florida (02296750), and at a few stations in the Arkansas-White-Red, Texas-Gulf, Rio Grande, and Lower Colorado Regions. Drinking water maxima were exceeded part of the time at most of the stations having mean fluoride concentrations in the range of 1-2 mg/L.

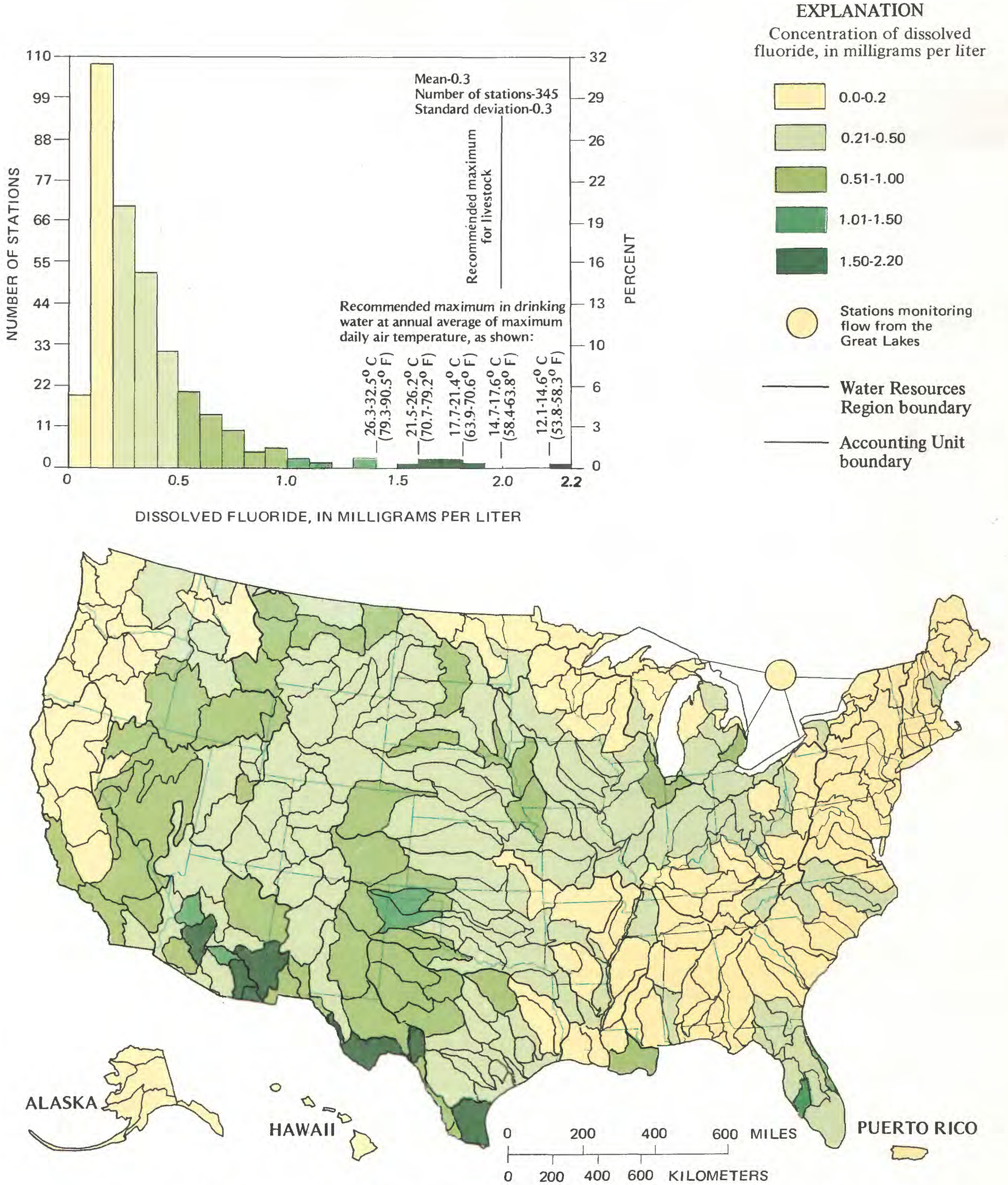


Figure 10. Mean concentration of dissolved fluoride at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

SPECIFIC CONDUCTANCE

Specific conductance, or electrical conductivity, is the ability of a substance to transmit an electrical current--the reciprocal of electrical resistance. In water, specific conductance is influenced by the amount of ionized material in solution, and it varies with the type of solutes as well as with the temperature of the water. For the sake of standardization, the Geological Survey reports specific conductance at a standard temperature of 25°C, using the units "micromhos per centimeter (μmho/cm) at 25°C."

Because specific conductance of water varies more or less in proportion to the amount of material in solution, it is an indicator of inorganic water quality. Specific conductance correlates well with the concentration of dissolved solids in many waters; and, in many instances, it also correlates well with the concentrations of many specific ions in solution. NASQAN data frequently show good relationships of specific conductance with concentrations of calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulfate, chloride, and hardness as $CaCO_3$.

Correlation and regression statistics describing the relationships between specific conductance and several other water-quality characteristics were determined for the NASQAN stations described in this report. The statistical parameters for each station are described in the several columns on the right side of the data table at the top of each page of table 12. Terms including the regression coefficient, $\underline{R}$, and the regression constant, $\underline{B}$, can be used to estimate concentration of a particular constituent by the equation

$$\text{Concentration, in mg/L} = R\,(SC) + B,$$

where

SC is specific conductance in μmho/cm at 25°C.

Although table 12 includes regression coefficients and constants for many of the constituents measured at each station, the values should be used with caution in estimating concentrations of some constituents due to the relatively small sample size. To guide the data user, the table contains values of the correlation coefficient between concentration and conductance, as well as the standard error of estimate for each regression. The correlation coefficient is marked if the relationship is not significant at the 95 percent confidence level (Weatherburn, 1952, p. 193).

Duration tables of specific conductance are included in table 12 for most NASQAN stations. These tables show the values of conductance that were exceeded during specific percentages of the year. They describe the annual variation as determined from daily observations or from continuous records of conductance. The duration tables provide more detail than is provided by the summary of conductance values measured at the time of the periodic chemical sampling. They provide more information on the extremes, and generally have a greater range than is shown by the 12 or so periodic measurements.

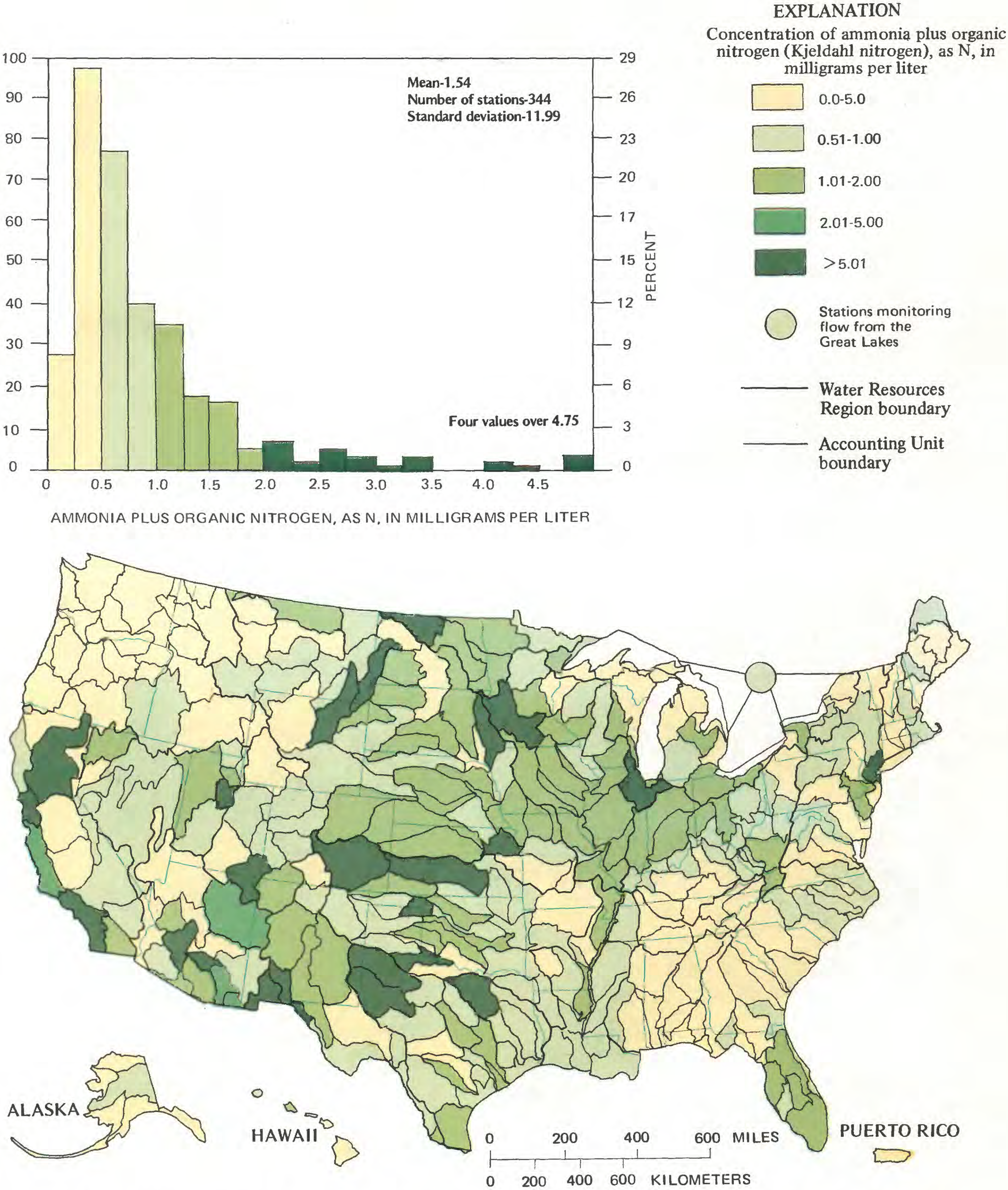


Figure 11. Mean concentration of ammonia plus organic nitrogen (Kjeldahl nitrogen), as N, at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

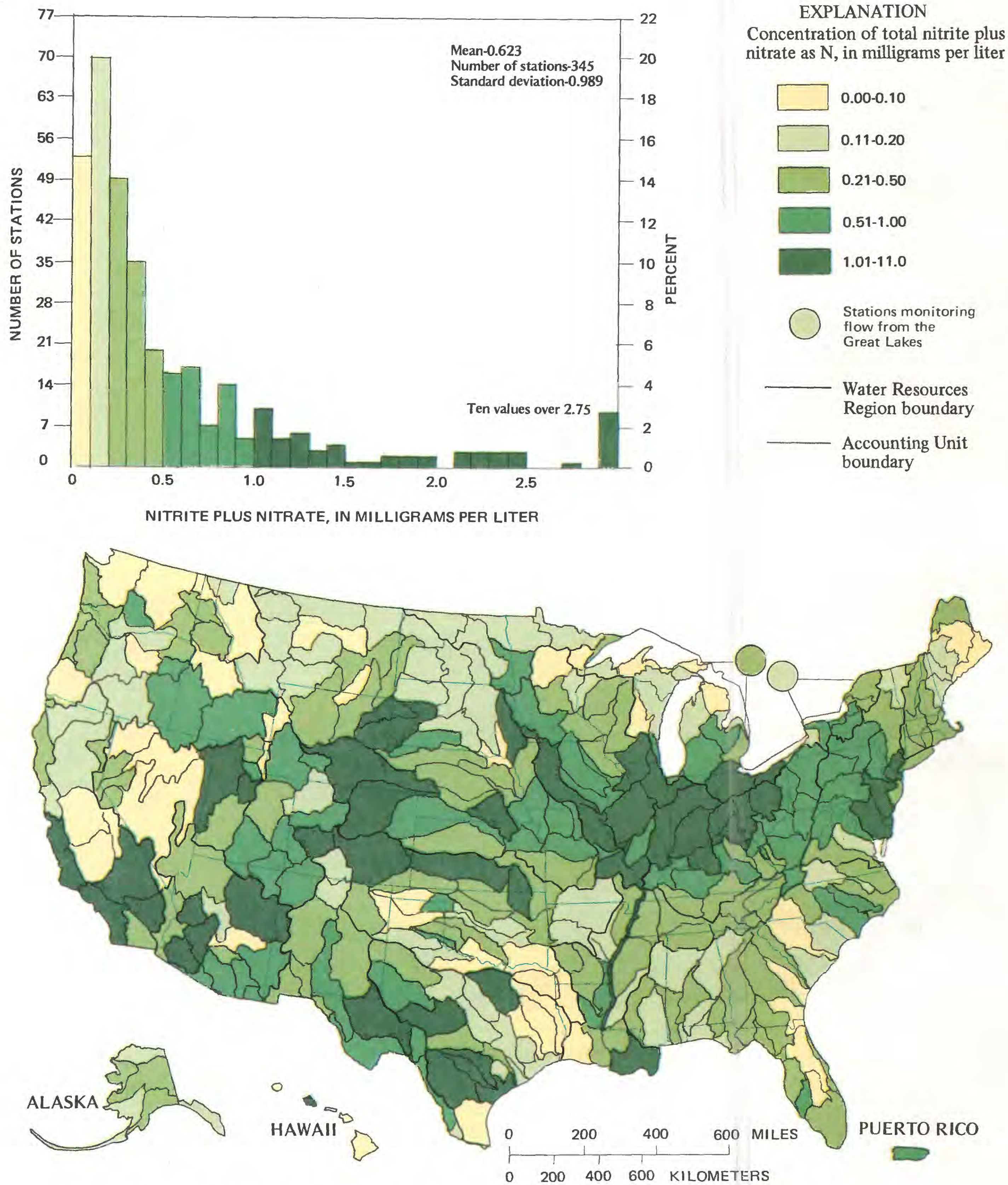


Figure 12. Mean concentration of total nitrite plus nitrate as N at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

greater than 1.0 mg/L, generally are associated with farming regions or areas of high population density. The single highest concentration, measured at the Gila River above the diversion of Gillespie Dam (09518000), is in an area that apparently received local runoff that was high in nitrogen.

Phosphorus.--Most of the phosphorus in streams is contributed by (1) breakdown and erosion of mineral forms (mostly phosphate-bearing rocks) in the soils, (2) human and animal wastes, (3) synthetic detergents, (4) fertilizers, and (5) plant detritus. Phosphorus usually occurs as a form of phosphate (PO_4^{-3}), and frequently is associated with suspended sediments. Concern for the levels of phosphorus in streams or lakes usually stems from the role that it plays as a nutrient contributing to excessive growths of algae and rooted plants.

There are no generally accepted, uniform standards or criteria for maximum concentrations of phosphorus in natural waters. The U.S. Council on Environmental Quality (1976, p. 271) has suggested maximum concentrations of phosphorus of 0.1 mg/L for "aquatic life protection." Standards or criteria set by individual states, most of which were set for the purpose of limiting eutrophication, vary from the CEQ criteria, but not by large amounts (from about 0.01 to about 0.3 mg/L as P) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1971).

Distribution of the mean concentrations of total phosphorus at NASQAN stations during the 1976 water year is shown on the histogram at the top of figure 13. About one fourth of the stations had mean concentrations of P of less than 0.05 mg/L; about half the stations had mean concentrations less than 0.1 mg/L, and about 30 percent had mean concentrations greater than 0.2 mg/L.

The map at the bottom of figure 13 shows the national pattern of total phosphorus concentration measured at NASQAN stations. Lowest concentrations were measured in the East (parts of New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic-Gulf Regions), in the West (parts of Pacific Northwest and Lower Colorado Regions), Hawaii, and a few scattered accounting units in the central part of the country. Concentrations greater than 0.1 mg/L were common in most of the streams of the central part of the country where there is considerable farming and where soils are erodible. The highest mean concentration was 10.9 mg/L for the Little Colorado River at Cameron, Arizona (09401200).

SUSPENDED SEDIMENT

The great amount of interest in stream sedimentation stems mainly from concerns for (1) the often harmful effects of erosion and deposition of material, and (2) the influences that sediments have on the usefulness and attractiveness of water. In order to assess these problems, it is necessary to document the amount of suspended sediment being carried by streams.

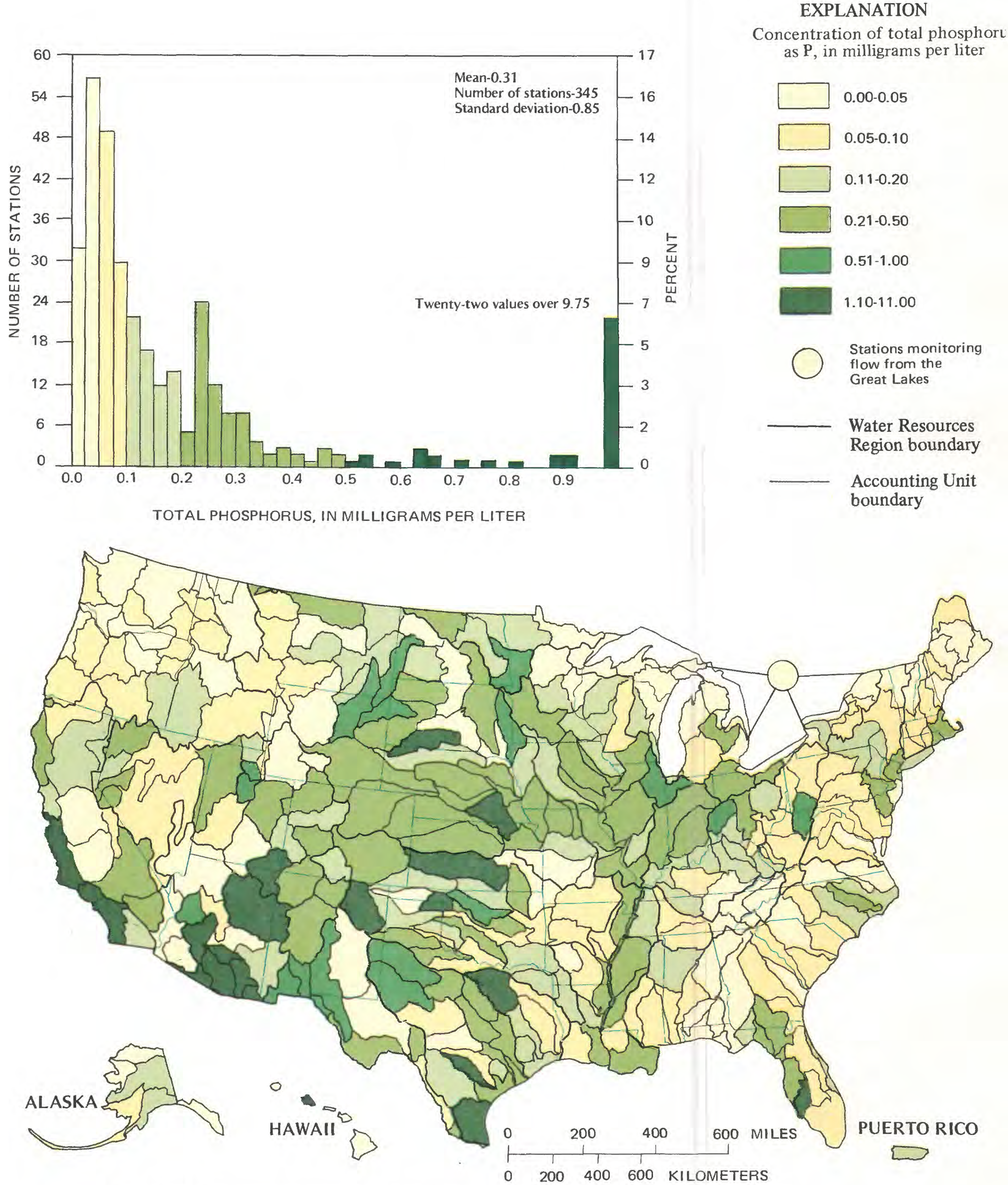


Figure 13. Mean concentration of total phosphorus as P at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

Sediment in streams results from erosion of soils and by scouring of both natural and man-made stream channels. Flowing streams carry some sediment almost all of the time, but by far the highest concentrations and greatest loads are carried by storm runoff.

Suspended-sediment samples are collected at most NASQAN stations normally once per month. Samples are analyzed for (1) concentration of suspended sediment (reported in milligrams per liter), and (2) clay-silt fraction (percent finer than 0.062 mm diameter). Problems regarding sampling frequency and schedules must be considered in evaluation of the suspended-sediment data from NASQAN. Suspended-sediment data presented in this report generally provide a fairly accurate representation of what one would expect to find during average conditions in the stream. In many cases this annual data does not provide sufficient information to determine the suspended sediment load or the mean size of the sediment carried in a stream during a year, since the samples are usually not collected during the periods of highest concentrations or greatest sediment loads.

Summaries of the suspended-sediment data collected at NASQAN stations during the 1976 water year are in table 12. Histograms and maps in figures 14 and 15 show the national patterns of suspended sediment as represented by the mean and maximum concentrations measured at the stations. Mean concentrations were less than 100 mg/L at about 60 percent of the stations, and exceeded 1,000 mg/L at only 26 stations (fig. 14). Both the largest mean concentration, 84,880 mg/L, and the highest reported single value, 149,000 mg/L, were at the San Pedro River at Winkelman, Arizona (09473500). In fact, only two NASQAN concentrations were greater than 90,000 mg/L. These were the San Pedro River and the Gila River at Kelvin, Arizona (09474000), (mean = 54,077 mg/L; maximum = 95,800 mg/L).

In general, lowest mean concentrations of suspended sediment were measured in the East, Southeast, Great Lakes, and Pacific Northwest. In some cases, anomalously low concentrations were measured at NASQAN stations located short distances downstream from reservoirs, which serve as sediment traps. In these cases, although sediments are being eroded from the land, they are not leaving the basins because they are trapped in the reservoirs.

Highest concentrations of suspended sediment were measured in streams draining the more heavily farmed, semiarid, or sparsely vegetated areas of the Mid-Atlantic, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Colorado, Texas-Gulf, Rio Grande, and Alaska Regions (fig. 15).

BACTERIA

There are many species of bacteria in natural waters; some are pathogenic, or disease causing, but fortunately most are harmless. People, of course, are concerned mainly about those that present threats of disease.

It is impossible to monitor for all forms of pathogens. Instead, knowing that certain disease-producing organisms move from person to person through the water, the waters are examined for signs that these organisms may be present. Classically, this has been done by monitoring for <u>indicator</u>

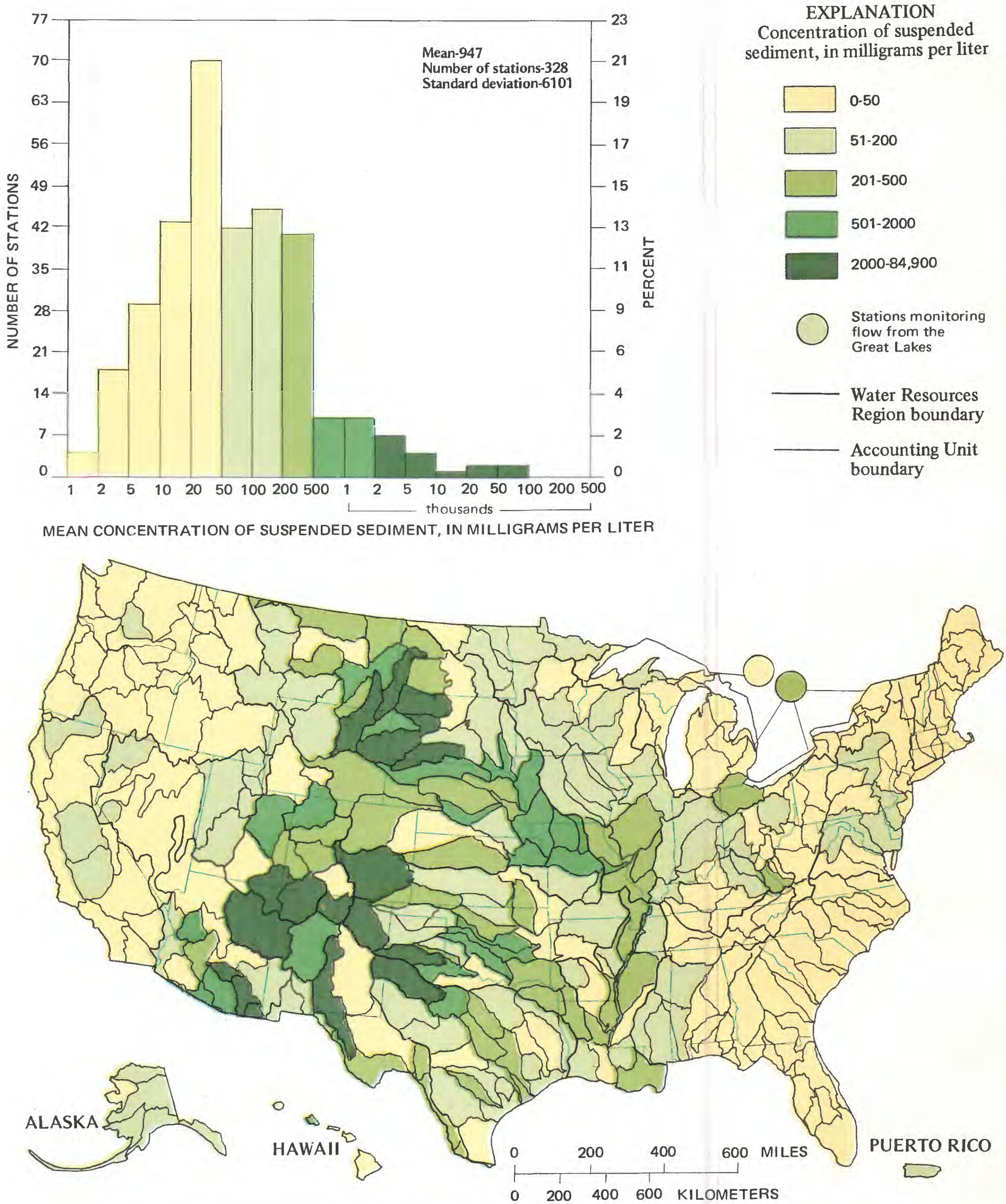
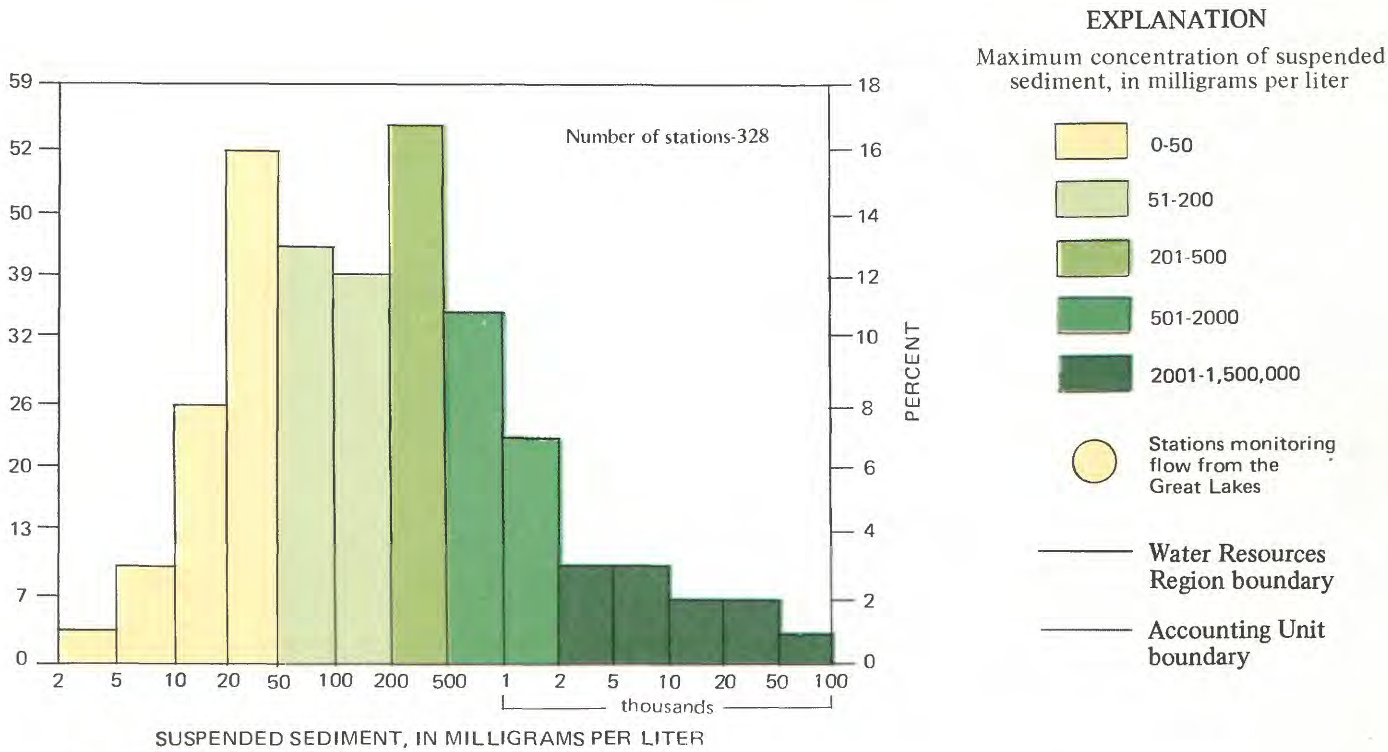


Figure 14. Mean concentration of suspended sediment at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.



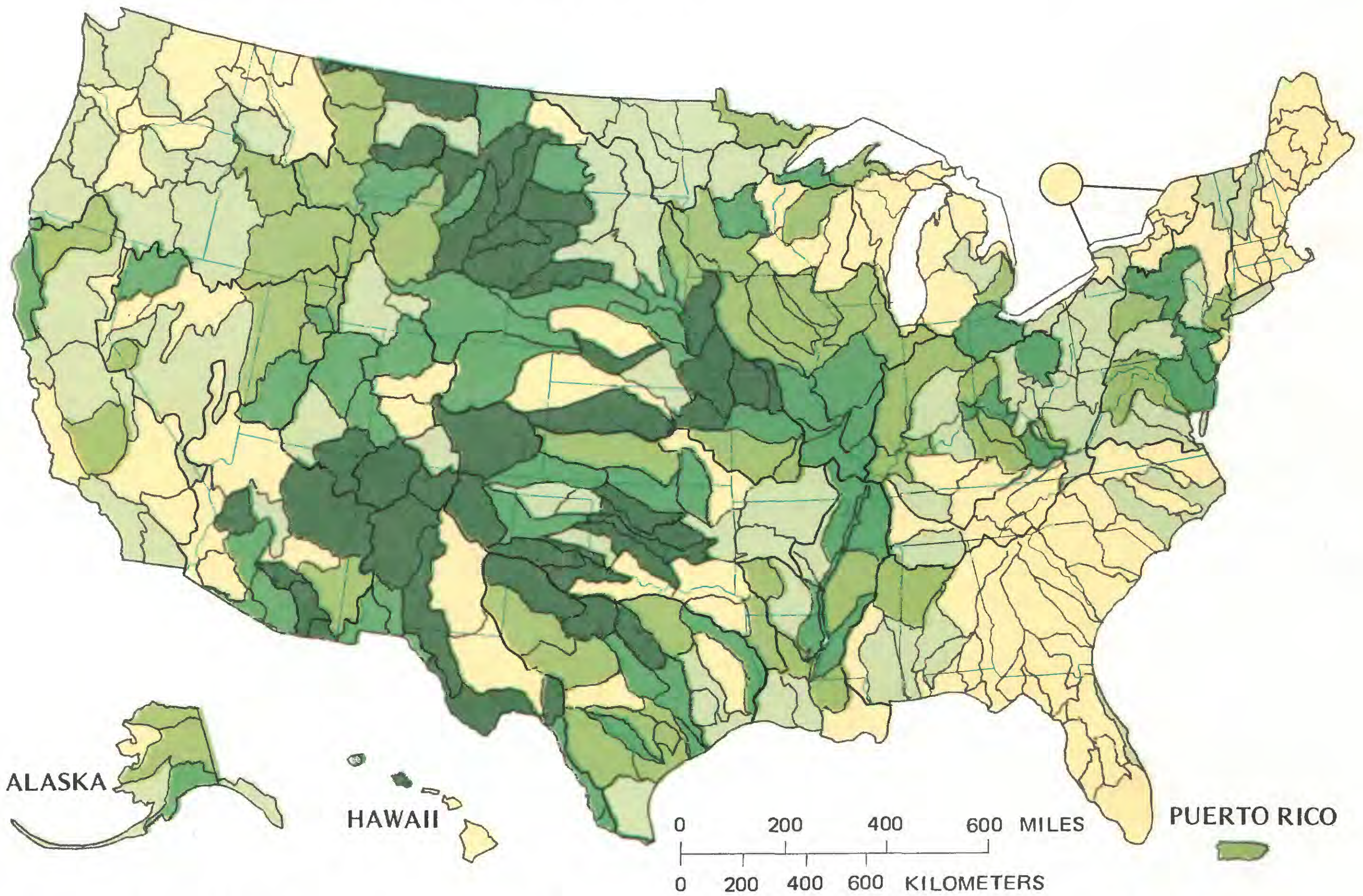


Figure 15. Maximum concentration of suspended sediment at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

organisms in the so-called coliform bacterial group, and more recently in the fecal streptococci bacterial group. The logic of the scheme is: (1) indicator bacteria show the presence of fecal contamination, and (2) contaminated waters are likely to contain pathogens in numbers proportional to the numbers of indicator bacteria.

At NASQAN stations, bacteria samples are collected at monthly intervals to determine numbers of (1) fecal coliform bacteria (those members of the coliform group found in the feces of various warm-blooded animals), and (2) fecal streptococci bacteria. Most standards and criteria of water quality are written in terms of numbers of total coliform or fecal coliform bacteria. Water Quality Criteria 1972 (National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering, 1972) recommends that raw waters used as a source for public supply contain not more than 2,000 colonies of fecal coliform bacteria per 100 mL, and that waters used for bathing have a log (geometric) mean count of fecal coliform bacteria of not more than 200 colonies per 100 mL. State standards and criteria generally are similar, but may differ over a broad range in some cases. Waters used for shellfish harvesting generally have much more stringent standards. Treated drinking waters usually have limits for total coliform bacteria of not more than 1 colony per 100 mL. Data on fecal coliform bacteria are used in hydrological studies as indicators of human and animal pollution. Rivers with high counts of fecal coliform bacteria usually are influenced by untreated sewage or by animal wastes.

Data representing mean numbers of fecal coliform bacteria at 341 NASQAN stations during the 1976 water year are shown on the histogram and map on figure 16. The life span of enteric bacteria is limited outside the body of a warm-blooded animal, so bacterial data from stream monitoring stations may reflect the influences of the reach immediately upstream from the sampling site. For this reason, maps with entire accounting units colored according to measurements at stations near the downstream end of the units are not so effective a form of presentation as were maps of chemical data. Nevertheless, the map on figure 16 does indicate some regions affected by animal or human wastes. Lowest mean colony counts generally occurred in the South Atlantic-Gulf, Tennessee, Upper Colorado, Great Basin, Pacific Northwest, California, and Alaska Regions. Highest colony counts are in streams flowing through heavily populated areas in several parts of the country or from areas with large populations of livestock.

Information on fecal streptococci bacteria often is collected as part of hydrologic studies to provide information about the probable sources of bacterial pollution. While fecal streptococci bacteria are found in the gut of all warm-blooded animals, there are many more fecal streptococci bacteria than fecal coliform bacteria in animals. Humans have more fecal coliform bacteria than fecal streptococci bacteria. Commonly used guidelines in interpreting bacteria data are: (1) a ratio of fecal coliform/fecal streptococci bacteria of greater than 4 indicates predominantly human sources, (2) a ratio of fecal coliform/fecal streptococci bacteria

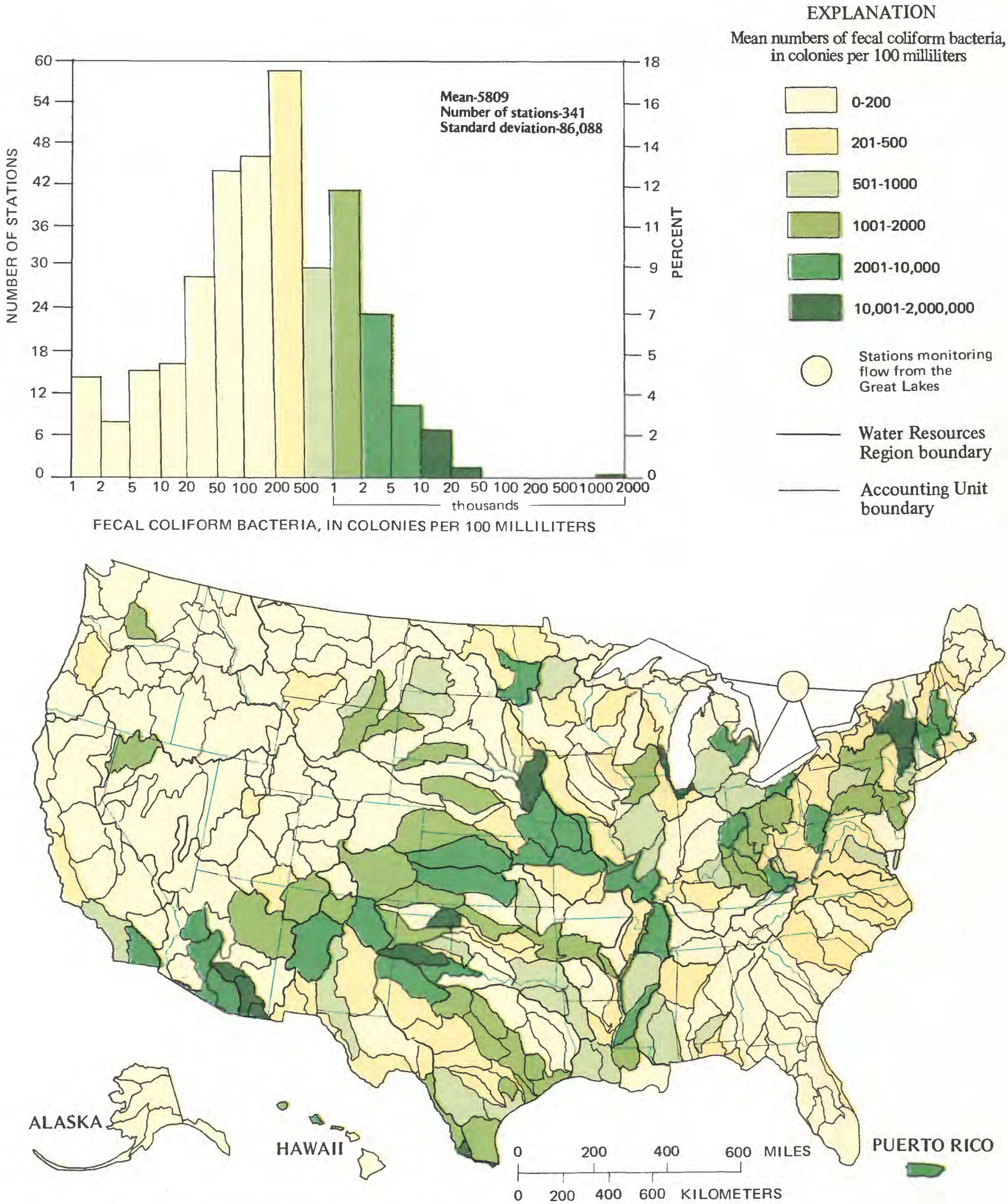


Figure 16. Mean numbers of fecal coliform bacteria sampled at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

of less than 1 indicates predominantly animal sources, and (3) a ratio in the range of 1 to 4 indicates a combination of human and animal sources. Data interpretation generally must be on a sample-by-sample basis and cannot be made from the data summaries and ranges given in table 12 of this report. Readers are directed to the USGS individual state reports of Water Resources Data for the specific information needed for interpretation. Also, the ratio cannot be used if the bacteria entered the stream more than 24 hours prior to the sampling.

PHYTOPLANKTON

Phytoplankton are suspended or free-floating plants that drift with water currents. A majority of the phytoplankton populations are made up of microscopic single-celled, colonial, or multicelled algae. They serve as food for higher forms of aquatic life, and in large numbers form nuisance "blooms" which can cause filter clogging, objectionable tastes and odors, and other problems in water-treatment plants.

Data on the concentrations and types of phytoplankton populations are widely used in water-quality studies as indicators of pollution and nutrient enrichment. In general, large populations indicate nutrient enrichment, and small populations indicate oligotrophic conditions (low nutrients and low productivity).

Samples for phytoplankton analyses are collected at NASQAN stations at approximately monthly intervals. They are analyzed for numbers of cells and identification of the predominant forms to the genus level. Summaries of the numbers of phytoplankton at NASQAN stations are given on the data sheets of table 12, and national summaries are represented on the map and histogram of figure 17. These data allow the interpretation of a national pattern, but it is not possible to cite any references of what really represents "good" or "bad" water as related to phytoplankton populations. There is, however, a similarity between the color patterns on figure 17 and the patterns for the principal nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorus, in figures 11, 12, and 13. Smallest populations were associated with regions of low human and livestock populations and low nutrient concentrations. Highest populations occurred in the nutrient rich waters in areas having large human and livestock population, intensive agriculture, and erodible soils.

PERIPHYTON

The term "periphyton" is applied to the community of microorganisms that are attached to or live upon submerged surfaces. They include algae that grow attached to stream bottoms, piers, rooted plants, floating debris, and other similar objects. They are studied in hydrologic investigations for much the same reasons that phytoplankton are studied--they serve as integrators and indicators of overall stream quality. Large growths of periphyton usually occur in waters rich in plant nutrients.

There are several ways to sample and measure periphyton. A common method is to scrape a sample from rocks or other objects, but such techniques do not provide the uniform results desired from a widely scattered network such as NASQAN. Consequently, periphyton at NASQAN stations were collected

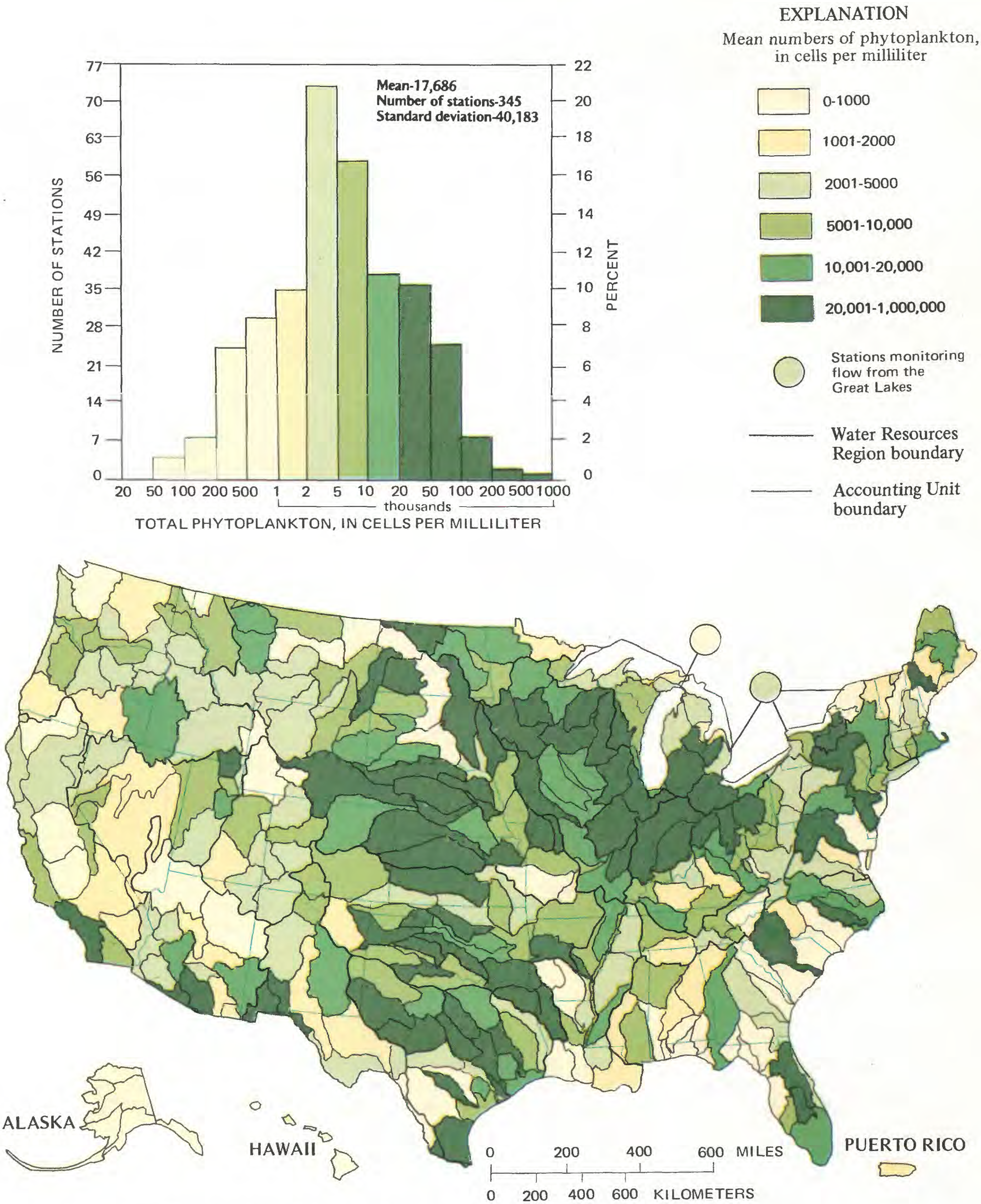


Figure 17. Mean numbers of phytoplankton sampled at NASQAN stations during 1976 water year. Map at bottom is colored to show mean data for stations representing flow from the accounting unit.

using artificial (plastic strip) substrates placed in the streams for exposure periods of from 2 to 4 weeks each. An attempt is made to collect periphyton samples four times per year (once each calendar quarter), but because of vandalism and other disturbances, recovery rate has been poor.

When the artificial substrates colonized by periphyton are recovered from streams at NASQAN stations, they are preserved and shipped to laboratories for analyses of biomass and chlorophyll content. Biomass analyses of "dry weight" represents the total organic matter, ash, and sediment present in the sample. Measurements of sample "ash weight" provide information on the amount of inorganic (mineral) content of the plants. The organic or weight of the periphyton is the difference between the dry weight and the ash weight, and represents the actual weight of the periphyton. Amounts of chlorophyll a and b (photosynthetic plant pigments) in the periphyton serve to indicate the biological productivity of the plant community.

Data summarizing the biomass and the chlorophyll content of periphyton collected at NASQAN stations during the 1976 water year are shown in the tables in the lower portion of each page of table 12. Numbers of samples are small--too small to compute mean values and construct histograms and maps, as was done with major inorganic chemicals, bacteria, and phytoplankton.

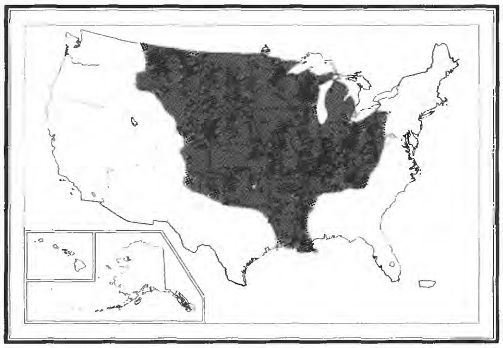
To facilitate interpretation of the periphyton data from the NASQAN stations, table 3 summarizes the data by Water Resources Region. Because of the small amount of data and the variability of measurements at each station and in each region, it is difficult to interpret the periphyton data, even on a regional basis. The biomass and chlorophyll data in table 3 suggest that periphyton growths tended to be least in New England, Alaska, and the Hawaii Regions, though data from the latter two regions were so scarce that valid comparisons with other regions probably cannot be made. Relatively high periphyton growths were measured in the Upper Mississippi, Missouri, Great Basin, and California Regions.

MINOR ELEMENTS

So-called minor elements are those that commonly occur in relatively small amounts in natural water. They also frequently are called trace metals. Many are of concern because, even in trace quantities, they may be toxic to people, to aquatic plants and animals, or to crops when present in irrigation water.

Eleven minor elements are measured regularly at NASQAN stations--arsenic, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, lead, manganese, mercury, selenium, and zinc. Analyses are performed on both unfiltered ("total") samples (water sediment mixtures) and on samples that have been filtered ("dissolved") through 0.45 micrometer pore-size membrane filters. In a few instances, dissolved concentrations reported for a particular sample exceed reported total concentrations because of the different precisions in the two determinations or because of non-representative sample-splitting prior to analyses.

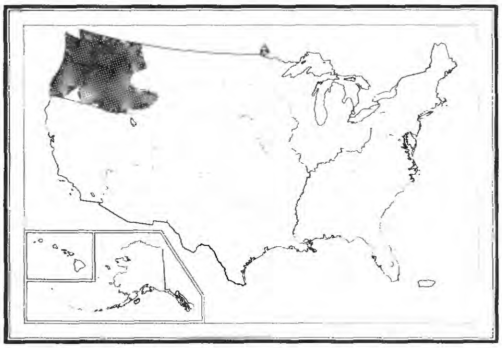
Midcontinent.--This large area of the central United States includes the basin of the Mississippi River, with its major tributaries, the Ohio, Missouri, and Arkansas, and several smaller tributaries, plus some drainage to the western Great Lakes and Canada. It is an area with generally more erodible soils and less annual precipitation than in the East. It also contains a major share of the Nation's agriculture.



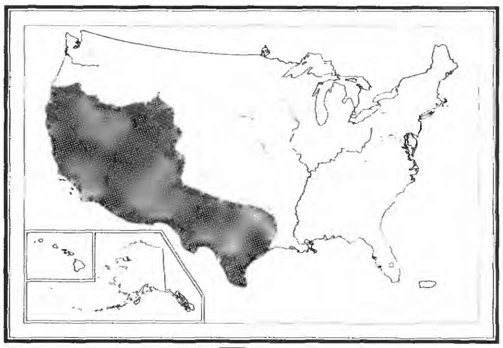
Because of more agricultural activity, different geologic characteristics and less rainfall, waters in the Midcontinent have higher concentrations of dissolved solids than do waters of the East. In some streams, these concentrations of inorganic materials exceed standards or criteria for public supply and other uses. The water is hard or very hard in many places, especially in parts of Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas. Fluoride concentrations are low to moderate with a number of streams having concentrations in the ideal range for the reduction of the incidence of tooth decay when used as drinking water. Concentrations of major nutrients and sediment are at moderate to high levels at many places. Communities of phytoplankton also frequently are high. Bacterial counts vary greatly throughout the area, and are relatively high in the southern half.

Data on the concentrations of minor elements vary greatly in the Midcontinent, but many of the metals are at higher levels in this region than they are in any other. The dissolved concentrations of most of these do not exceed standards for public supply, but many of the total concentrations do exceed the aquatic-life standards. The highest concentrations of dissolved and total arsenic and selenium; dissolved cobalt, copper, lead, and manganese; and total iron and mercury were found in streams in this area.

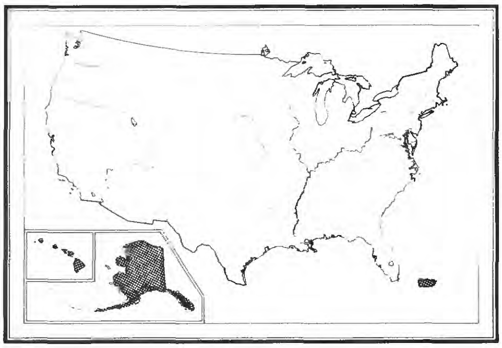
Northwest.--Streams of the relatively humid Northwest are somewhat like the rivers of the East. The dissolved solids concentrations are low, and the waters generally are soft to moderately hard. Concentrations of major nutrients range from low to high levels, while sediment concentrations, phytoplankton numbers, and periphyton values range from low to moderately high. Counts of fecal coliform bacteria are low, and concentrations of total organic carbon are in the low to moderate range. Dissolved minor elements generally are at low or moderate levels; high concentrations were found for total concentrations of copper, iron, lead, and mercury.



Southwest.--Many of the highest concentrations of dissolved solids and major chemicals are found in the rivers of the Southwest, and concentrations commonly exceed water-quality standards or criteria. Waters in most streams of this area are hard or very hard, and most carry large amounts of sediment and moderate to high concentrations of nutrients. Communities of phytoplankton and periphyton also are moderately high. Fluoride is at nearly ideal concentrations in several of the streams, but exceeds the drinking water standards at two sites in the lower Colorado basin. Bacterial counts range widely and are moderately high in some streams, and total organic carbon varies over a large range. Concentrations of minor elements usually are at low levels in dissolved forms and are at moderate levels in total forms. Usually, the highest concentrations for dissolved and total cadmium and chromium; dissolved iron and mercury; and total cobalt, copper, lead, manganese, and zinc were found in streams in Arizona and Southern California.



Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.--



Waters at NASQAN stations in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico are generally low in dissolved solids and are soft. Nutrient concentrations generally are in the moderate range, but they vary considerably in Alaska and Hawaii. Phytoplankton communities are low and periphyton communities are at low to moderate levels compared with the rest of the United States. Concentrations of sediment are at moderate levels and numbers of fecal coliform bacteria are low in Alaska, moderately high in Hawaii, and high in Puerto Rico. Minor elements are generally at low levels, except for total concentrations of chromium, manganese, and iron which are moderately high in some samples, especially in Hawaii.

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