

Surface Water Quality-Assurance Plan for the North Florida Program Office of the U.S. Geological Survey

By Marvin A. Franklin

U.S. Geological Survey

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Surface Water Quality-Assurance Plan for the Florida North Florida Program Office of the U.S. Geological Survey

By Marvin A. Franklin

Abstract

The U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division, has a policy that requires each District office to prepare a Surface Water Quality-Assurance Plan. The plan for each District describes the policies and procedures that ensure high quality in the collection, processing, analysis, computer storage, and publication of surface-water data. The North Florida Program Office Surface Water Quality-Assurance Plan documents the standards, policies, and procedures used by the North Florida Program office for activities related to the collection, processing, storage, analysis, and publication of surface-water data.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) was established by an act of Congress on March 3, 1879, to provide a permanent Federal agency to perform the systematic and scientific "classification of the public lands, and examination of the geologic structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain." Surface-water activities in the North Florida Program office are part of the Water Resources Division's (WRD) mission of appraising the Nation's water resources. Surface-water information, including streamflow, stage, and sediment data, are used at the Federal, State, and local levels for resources planning and management.

This Surface-Water Quality-Assurance Plan (QA Plan) describes and documents the standards, policies, responsibilities, and procedures used by the North Florida Program office for activities related to the collection, processing, storage, analysis, and publication of surface-water data. This QA Plan identifies responsibilities of designated personnel to ensure that national policies and procedures are followed. The QA Plan also serves as a guide for all North Florida Program personnel involved in surface-water activities and serves as a resource for identifying memorandums, publications, and other literature that describe associated techniques and requirements. This QA Plan is reviewed and revised at least once every 3 years to keep responsibilities and methodologies described herein current and to document ongoing procedural improvements.

Specific types of surface-water data include stage, streamflow, sediment, and basin characteristics. Issues are presented in this QA Plan that relate to effective management of the computer data base and employee safety and training. Although procedures and products of interpretive projects are subject to the criteria presented in this report, specific interpretive projects are required to have a separate and complete QA Plan.

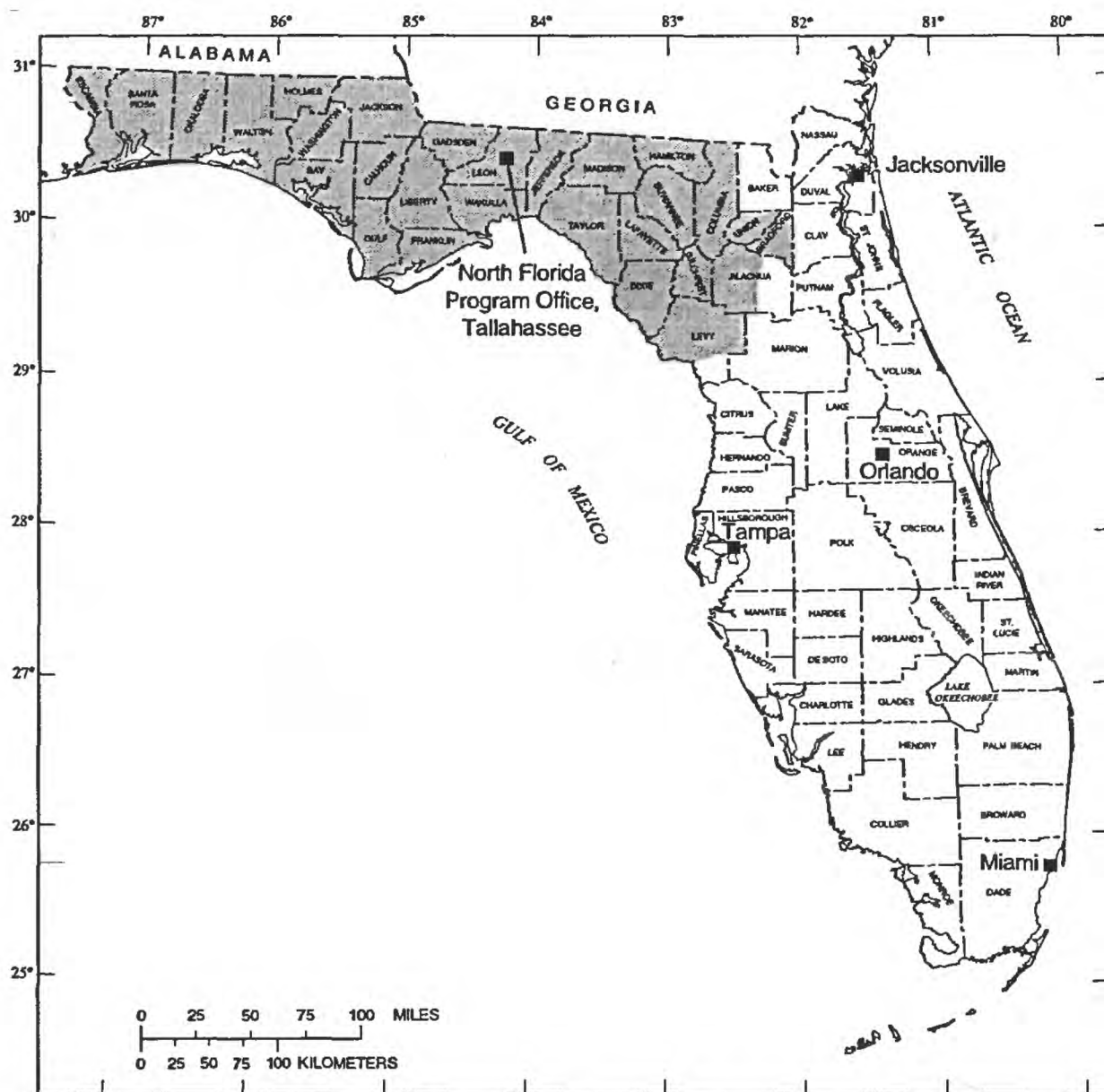


Figure 1. Location of the U.S. Geological Survey North Florida Program office and area in Florida.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Quality assurance (QA) is a continuing process. To achieve and maintain high-quality standards for surface-water data, specific actions must be accomplished by individuals. Errors and deficiencies can result when individuals fail to carry out their responsibilities. Clear and specific statements of responsibilities promote an understanding of each person's duties in the overall process of assuring surface-water data quality. The responsibility for implementation of the QA Plan is distributed among the personnel of the North Florida Program office. Much of the responsibility rests with the field offices and Hydrologic Records Section. However, ultimately, quality assurance is the responsibility of the North Florida Program Chief. The following list summarizes responsibilities of North Florida Program personnel involved in the collection, processing, storage, analysis, or publication of surface-water data.

North Florida Program Personnel Responsible for Collection, Processing, Storage, Analysis, or Publication of Surface-Water Data

- North Florida Program Chief: *Edward T. Oaksford*
- Hydrologic Surveillance Section Chief (HSSC): *Marvin A. Franklin*
- Network Unit Chief (NUC): *Paul E. Meadows*
- Surface-Water Specialist: *Vacant*
- Safety Officer: *Roger P. Rumenik*
- Water Quality Specialist: *Brian Katz*

The North Florida Program Chief is responsible for:

1. Managing and directing the North Florida Program, including all surface-water activities.
2. Ensuring that surface-water activities in the North Florida Program meet the needs of the Federal Government, the Florida District, State and local agencies, other cooperating agencies, and the general public.
3. Ensuring that all aspects of this QA Plan are understood and followed by North Florida Program personnel. This is accomplished by the North Florida Program Chief's direct involvement or through clearly stated delegation of this responsibility to other personnel in the North Florida Program.
4. Providing final resolution of any conflicts or disputes related to surface-water activities within the North Florida Program.
5. Briefing subordinates on procedural and technical communications from Regional and Headquarters personnel.

6. Ensuring technical reviews of all surface-water programs on a quarterly basis.
7. Ensuring that all publications and other technical communications released by the North Florida Program are accurate and are in accordance with USGS policy.

The Hydrologic Surveillance Section Chief (HSSC) is responsible for:

1. Assisting the North Florida Program office Chief in preparing annual cost for operation and maintenance costs for the sound financial operation of the Hydrologic Records Section.
2. Ensuring that the section personnel receive the proper training in all aspects of field and office procedures.
3. Ensuring remedial actions are taken to correct any observed or suspected program or project deficiency.
4. Sharing duties and other responsibilities with the NUC and the Surface-Water Specialist to ensure the quality of surface-water data for the North Florida Program office.
5. Assigning experienced field-office personnel to provide on-the-job training of new employees in standard, acceptable field practices.

The Network Unit Chief (NUC) is responsible for:

1. Assisting the HSSC in assuring that field and office activities are performed in accordance with specified WRD standard practices and policies.
2. Ensuring that field and office activities are performed by adequately qualified, experienced, and supervised personnel.
3. Ensuring all surface-water activities and procedures receive appropriate and timely review for completeness, reliability, credibility, and conformance to specified standards.
4. Sharing duties and other responsibilities with the HSSC and Surface-Water Specialist to ensure the quality of surface-water data for the North Florida Program office.
5. Examining data collected by inexperienced or new field personnel for completeness, accuracy and adherence to prescribed collection techniques.

The Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for:

1. Assuring that proper methods are used for collecting all types of surface-water data in the Florida District.
2. Serving as the District Flood Specialist for documenting flood events, assisted by designated personnel from the Hydrologic Surveillance Section as needed.
3. Performing periodic checks of individual personnel for proper field and data-collection procedures, the frequency of these checks are based on the experience and complexity of work being done. Even the most experienced personnel are reviewed at least on a biennial basis.
4. Assuring that North Florida Program surface-water programs and projects are planned to efficiently and effectively provide information required to solve high priority areal or national water problems and to satisfy local needs.
5. Sharing duties and other responsibilities with the HSSC and NUC to ensure the quality of surface-water data for the North Florida Program office.
6. Assists with or conducts appropriate technical training for North Florida Program office personnel.

The Safety Officer is responsible for:

1. Ensuring adherence to Division and local safety standards and proper operation and maintenance of data-collection facilities. Deficiencies are documented and transmitted to the appropriate supervisory personnel for immediate resolution.
2. Arranges for training in safety-related area, such as boating, first aid, and CPR.

Responsibilities of all personnel in Surface-Water Records Section:

Ensuring the highest level of accuracy of all streamflow data collected by following the prescribed procedures and guidelines set forth by the Office of Surface Water (OSW) and the Florida District.

COLLECTION OF STAGE AND STREAMFLOW DATA

Many of society's daily activities, including residential and commercial development, industry, agriculture, energy production, waste disposal, and recreation, are closely linked to streamflow and water availability. Therefore, reliable surface-water data are necessary for planning and resource management. The collection of streamflow data is a primary component in the ongoing operation of streamflow-gaging stations (referred to in the remainder of this report as gaging stations) and other water-resource studies performed by the USGS, including the Florida District.

The objective of operating a gaging station is to obtain a continuous record of stage and discharge at the site (Carter and Davidian, 1968, p. 1). A continuous record of stage is obtained by installing instruments that sense and record water-surface elevation in the stream. Discharge measurements are made at periodic intervals to define or verify the stage-discharge relation and to define the time and magnitude of variations in that relation.

The policy of the North Florida Program office is to ensure that all data-collection activities are in conformance with the WRD guidelines pertaining to the collection of stage and streamflow data. All employees are informed and expected to follow the surface-water data-collection policies and procedures established by the WRD.

Gage Installation and Maintenance

Proper installation and maintenance of gaging stations are critical activities for ensuring quality in streamflow-data collection and analysis. Effective site selection, correct design and construction, and regular maintenance of a gaging station can make the difference between efficient and accurate determination of drainage-basin discharge or time-consuming, poor estimations of flow.

Sites are selected for installation of gaging stations to meet the purpose of each specific gage. Additionally, sites are selected with the intent of achieving, to the greatest extent possible, optimum hydraulic conditions in order to provide conditions leading to a stable relationship between stage and discharge. Criteria that describe the ideal gaging-station site are listed in Rantz and others (1982, p. 5). These criteria include: unchanging natural controls that promote a stable stage-discharge relation, a satisfactory reach for measuring discharge throughout the range of stage, and a means for efficient access to the gage and measuring location. Other aspects of controls considered by North Florida Program office personnel when planning gaging station installations include those discussed in Kennedy (1984, p. 2).

The employees responsible for selecting sites for new gaging stations are the Surface-Water Specialist, HSSC, or NUC. The process of site selection includes: discussion with cooperators on the purpose of the gage, analysis of terrain with the use of topographic maps, field reconnaissance, evaluation of types of installation and equipment options, and a file search to determine if discontinued stations or partial record stations existed in the area. The responsibility for ensuring proper documentation of agreements with property owners is held by the HSSC or the NUC. Approval of site design, construction of gages, and inspection and approval of the completed installation is the responsibility of the HSSC or the NUC.

A policy to carefully inspect and maintain gages promotes the collection of reliable and accurate data. Equipment and structures that fall into a state of disrepair can result in unreliable data and safety problems. The North Florida Program office requires that a visual inspection be performed at sites by field personnel during each site visit, if possible. To prevent the buildup of mud or the clogging of intakes, stilling wells are pumped and intakes are flushed at gaging stations as needed. Gages that are equipped with intakes and flushing devices are flushed during each site visit. Other maintenance activities performed on a regular basis include running levels, calibration of equipment, checking battery voltage, and other measures as needed.

Each field person is responsible for ensuring that gages are kept in good repair. To ensure these responsibilities are carried out, annual inspections of at least 50 percent of gaging stations are performed by the NUC or the Safety Officer. Inspections include, but are not limited to, physical structure, outside gages, inside gages, cable-way, equipment, and measuring section(s). Any deficiencies are communicated to the employee(s) responsible for the gaging station. Immediate action is taken by the employee(s) to correct the deficiencies.

Measurement of Stage

Many types of instruments are available and continue to be improved to measure the water level or stage at gaging stations. There are nonrecording gages (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 24) and recording gages (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 32). Because the uses to which stage data may be used cannot be predicted, it is OSW policy that surface-water stage records be collected at stream sites having instrumentation and procedures to provide sufficient accuracy supporting computation of discharge from a stage-discharge relation, unless greater accuracy is required (OSW memorandum 93.07).

Generally, operation of gaging stations for the purpose of determining daily discharge includes the goal of collecting stage data at the accuracy of ± 0.01 foot (OSW memorandum 89.08). Situations may occur where lower accuracy is acceptable. In those cases, the project proposal or station descriptions and analyses will state why a lower accuracy is being used. An explanation of WRD policy on stage-measurement accuracy as it relates to instrumentation is provided in OSW memorandum 93.07.

The types of instrumentation installed at any specific gaging station operated by North Florida Program is dependent on physical site conditions for choosing appropriate instrumentation needs, the needs of the cooperator, the availability of utility lines for land-line data access, types of terrain, expected range of stage, and other factors that would influence the data-collection process. Types of water-level recorders operated by personnel in the North Florida Program include various types of electronic data logger (EDL), Data collection platforms (DCPs), submersible pressure sensors, and will include other types of instrumentation as they are developed and tested.

The responsibility for determining what type of water-level recorders and at what time interval that data are collected at for each gaging station is held by the HSSC, NUC, or Project Chief. Ensuring that new equipment has been installed correctly is the responsibility of the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist. Proper maintenance of gage instrumentation or replacement of equipment, if appropriate, is the responsibility of the field personnel who service the gage.

Accurate stage measurement requires not only accurate instrumentation but also proper installation and continual monitoring of all system components to ensure the accuracy does not deteriorate with time (OSW memorandum 93.07). To ensure that instruments, located within the gage house, record water levels that accurately represent the water levels of the body of water being investigated, "inside" and "outside" water-level readings are obtained by independent means and are compared to the designated reference gage, as described in the station description and/or station analysis. The inside gage readings do not necessarily always equal outside readings, especially if the gages are not in the same pool at all ranges of stage. At stations equipped with a stilling well, the base or reference gage usually is an instrument installed inside the gage house, and other gages are installed outside the gage house to indicate whether or not the intakes are operating properly (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 53 and p. 64).

Personnel servicing the gage are responsible for comparing inside and outside gage readings during each site visit to determine if the outside water level is being represented correctly by the gages. If a deficiency is identified, the personnel servicing the gages are responsible for thoroughly documenting the problem on the field note sheet and either correcting the problem immediately or contacting the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist so that corrective actions can be taken at the earliest opportunity.

Ensuring that instrumentation installed at gaging stations is properly serviced and calibrated is the responsibility of the HSSC and/or Surface-Water Specialist. This responsibility is accomplished by spot checking data from several gages using real-time data or periods immediately following field trips. When deficiencies are identified, field personnel are instructed by the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist to replace equipment or are provided further instruction for proper calibration procedures, or other options that are appropriate. Individuals who have questions related to the calibration and maintenance of water-level recorders should contact the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist. The standard procedures for documenting corrections to gage height data are covered in OSW memorandum 91.09.

Most of the basic concepts and procedures used in surface-water data collection activities are presented in the three "Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations of the U.S. Geological Survey" (TWRI) series chapters entitled "General Procedures for Gaging Streams," "Stage Measurements at Gaging Stations," and "Discharge Measurements at Gaging Stations." A number of the important aspects contained in these references are enumerated and reinforced here. Generally, all surface-water data collection activities are in accordance with procedures as outlined in the TWRI's. For data collection activities not adequately covered by written instruction, supervisors assign personnel who are capable through unique experience and/or special training.

On-the-job training of new employees in standard, acceptable field practices is performed by designees of the HSSC. In all cases, instructors are experienced and knowledgeable concerning prescribed techniques and proper procedures. Data collected by inexperienced field personnel are closely examined for completeness, accuracy and adherence to prescribed collection techniques by the designated members of the Hydrologic Data Unit. The intensity of these examinations remains at a high level until the employee possesses a thorough knowledge of technical concepts and demonstrates acceptable practical skills.

To ensure that personnel are knowledgeable concerning prescribed practices, procedures, and methodologies, and that existing guidelines are followed, the District Training Officer and Discipline Specialists in cooperation with appropriate section chiefs, project leaders and individuals, identify training needs and conduct, direct, or arrange formal technical training sessions. Formal training needs are addressed in each Individual Development Plan (IDP). These plans are updated at least once a year along with other aspects of career development. Updates of training received, reassignment, or project activities changes are made to the IDP as required.

Gage Documents

North Florida Program policy ensures that certain documents are placed in each gage house to keep an on-site record of observations, equipment maintenance, structural maintenance, and other information helpful to field personnel. Documents maintained at each gage house include: (1) the most recent digital stage-discharge relation (rating); (2) a graph of the rating upon which each new measurement is plotted; (3) the most recent station description listing all gages and reference marks at the site and associated elevations, locations of measurement cross sections, information related to extreme events including the potential for channel storage between the gage and measuring section during flood conditions, and other information (see the section "Site Documentation, Station Description" in this report); (4) a log updated by field personnel upon each site visit describing control conditions and listing gage readings, measurement values, gage-house maintenance, and equipment maintenance; (5) a water-year calendar; (6) important telephone numbers. Optional documents that may be beneficial to keep in the gage house include equipment instructions.

The NUC and field personnel who run a regularly scheduled field trip are responsible for exchanging outdated material with updated gage documents as needed. Individual with questions related to what documents should be kept in a gage house, when the documents should be replaced with newer documents, or appropriate methods of appending logs or plotting measurements should contact the NUC.

Levels

The various gages at a gaging station are set to register the elevation of a water surface above a selected level reference surface called the gage datum. The gage's supporting structures such as stilling wells, backings, shelters, bridges, and other type structures, tend to settle or rise as a result of earth movement, static or dynamic loads, vibration, or battering by floodwaters and flood-borne debris. Vertical movement of a structure causes the attached gages to be too high or too low and, if the errors go undetected, may lead to increased uncertainties in streamflow records. Leveling, a procedure by which surveying instruments are used to determine the differences in elevation between points, is used to set the gages and to check them from time to time for vertical movement (Kennedy, 1990, p. 1). Levels are run periodically to all bench marks, reference marks, reference points, and gages at each station for the purpose of determining if any datum changes have occurred (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 545).

North Florida Program policy ensures that levels are run at newly installed gaging stations either at the time of construction or within 6 weeks of when record collection begins. Levels are run to established gaging stations once every 3 years or more often as conditions warrant as described in TWRI, Book 3, Chapter A19, "Levels at Streamflow Gaging Stations" (Kennedy 1990, p. 14), and OSW memorandum 90.10. All gages are reset to agree with levels when the levels indicate at least a 0.02-foot vertical change. Level notes are checked before the gage is reset. When gages are reset, field personnel document the change by including pertinent information on level field notes and/or miscellaneous note sheets. Standard field note forms indicate the information requirements for

routine operational activities such as current-meter discharge measurements and stream-gage recorder servicing. However, supplemental notes are required for reporting unusual conditions, deviations from standard practice, personal judgments, and all other information that may be of subsequent value.

Levels are run by use of field methods and documentation methods described in Kennedy (1990) and in TWRI, Book 3, Chapter A19. Level procedures followed by North Florida Program personnel pertaining to circuit closure, instrument reset, and repeated use of turning points are described in Kennedy (1990), in OSW memorandum 93.12, and in TWRI, Book 3, Chapter A19. The level instruments are kept in proper adjustment by proper care and handling of equipment. Annual peg tests are performed and documented and any corrections made are noted on the peg-test form. A log of peg tests for each instrument is kept in each field office and a copy of the latest peg test is kept with the instrument.

The field person and NUC are responsible for ensuring that field level notes are checked. The level information is entered in the level-summary form by field personnel involved in running the levels and are checked during the station analysis procedures for the year. Ensuring that levels are run correctly and that all level notes are completed correctly is the responsibility of the field person or NUC. Ensuring that levels are run at the appropriate frequency is the responsibility of the field person and NUC.

Site Documentation

Thorough documentation of qualitative and quantitative information describing each gaging station is required. This documentation, in the form of a station description and photographs, provides a permanent record of site characteristics, structures, equipment, instrumentation, location, and changes in conditions at each site. Information pertaining to where these forms of documentation are maintained is discussed in the section of this report entitled "Office Setting."

Station Descriptions

A station description is prepared and becomes part of the permanent record for each station. Station descriptions are written to include specific types of information in a consistent format (Kennedy, 1983, p. 2, figs. 1 and 2). North Florida Program policy ensures that the station description is written by the time the first year's records are computed and analyzed. The field person or NUC is responsible for ensuring that station descriptions are prepared correctly and updated in a timely manner. Station descriptions are reviewed each year during the annual station analysis report process.

Photographs

Photographs of newly installed gage houses, station controls, reference marks, damaged structures, and other pertinent information are made by field personnel as needed to document gage-house construction, changes in control conditions, or to supplement various forms of written descriptions. A print of each photograph that becomes part of the station record is identified with gage information on the back of the photograph with a permanent-ink marker. A digital camera is available from the North Florida Program Chief. These digital files will be stored in the archive directory. Photographs also are taken for indirect measurements, stereo photographs, and aerial photographs to document surface-water gaging-station structures, channels or controls, and for major events. Photographs for the gaging station are placed in the historical files or with indirect measurements for each station.

Direct Measurements

Direct measurements of discharge are made using methods approved by WRD. The most common is the current-meter method. A current-meter measurement is the summation of the products of the subsection areas of the stream cross section and their respective average velocities (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 80). Procedures used for current-meter measurements are described in Rantz and others (1982, p. 139); Carter and Davidian (1968, p. 7), and Buchanan and Somers (1969, p. 1). Procedures for using an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler are described in Lipscomb (1995).

When personnel make measurements of stream discharge, attempts are made to minimize errors. Sources of errors are identified in Sauer and Meyer (1992). These include random errors such as depth errors associated with soft, uneven, or mobile streambeds, or uncertainties in mean velocity associated with vertical-velocity distribution errors and pulsation errors. Errors also include systematic errors, or bias, associated with improperly calibrated equipment or the improper use of such equipment. Field trips are rotated to different personnel for one trip every year to minimize systematic errors.

North Florida Program guidelines, in accordance with WRD policies related to the measurement of discharge using the current-meter method, are listed below. To document the accurate performance of meters used to make streamflow discharge measurements, the North Florida Program uses care and maintenance procedures and spin-test documentation as recommended by OSW Technical Memorandum No. 89.07. Individual responsibilities are well documented by this memorandum and all personnel who make current meter streamflow measurements are expected to follow the procedures as outlined. The prescribed spin-test logs are maintained in the office.

Depth criteria for meter selection.—North Florida Program personnel select the type of current meter to be used for each discharge measurement on the basis of criteria provided in appendix B. Meters are used with caution when a measurement must be made in conditions outside of the ranges of the method provided by OSW. Any deviation from those criteria are noted and the measurement accuracy is downgraded accordingly.

Number of measurement subsections.—The spacing of observation verticals in the measurement section can affect the accuracy of the measurement (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 179). The North Florida Program criteria require that observations of depth and velocity be made at a minimum of about 25-30 verticals, which are necessary so that no more than 5 percent of the total flow is measured in any one vertical. Even under the worst conditions, the discharge computed for each vertical should not exceed 10 percent of the total discharge and, ideally, not exceed more than 5 percent (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 140). Exceptions to this policy are allowed in circumstances where accuracy would be sacrificed if this number of verticals were maintained, such as for measurements during rapidly changing stage (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 174). Fewer verticals than are ideal are sometimes used for very narrow streams. Measurement of discharge is essentially a sampling process and the accuracy of sampling results decreases markedly when the number of verticals is less than 25.

Other direct methods of measuring discharge.—North Florida Program policy ensures that WRD and OSW techniques and guidelines are followed when discharge measurements are made with any selected method. These methods include using the Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP). The ADCP methods used are in accordance with USGS standard procedures and are documented as described by Lipscomb (1995). Volumetric techniques and methods involving portable weirs and flumes are used occasionally, and are made in accordance with prescribed procedures as covered by Rantz and others (1982), Buchanan and Somers (1969), and Kilpatrick and Schneider (1983).

Computation of mean gage height.—North Florida Program personnel use procedures presented in Rantz and others (1982, p. 170) for the computation of mean gage height during a discharge measurement. Mean gage height is the independent variable in the stage-discharge relation at a streamflow-gaging site.

Check measurements.—A second discharge measurement often is made for the purpose of checking a first discharge measurement. If the measurement exceeds normal tolerance, a check measurement is made, computed and also checked against the rating curve. Normal tolerance is generally within 5 percent. However, many streams in Florida have loose sand channel controls and are subject to considerable shifting. Normal tolerance for these streams is within 8 percent. Exempt from the check measurement policy are measurements made on highly regulated streams where the previous measurement conditions no longer exist, are changing rapidly, or are expected to change immediately due to regulation patterns. Also exempt from the check measurement policy are measurements made where changes in the control are observed.

Corrections for storage.—Corrections for storage applied to measured discharges for the purpose of defining stage-discharge relations are those discussed in Rantz and others (1982, p. 177) and in OSW memorandum 92.09.

Questions.—Personnel should address questions concerning the appropriate procedures for making stage and discharge measurements to the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist.

Field Notes

Thorough documentation of field observations and data-collection activities performed by field personnel are a necessary component of surface-water data collection and analysis. To ensure that clear, thorough, and systematic notations are made during field observations, discharge measurements are recorded by field personnel on standard measurement forms. Field notes identify the procedures, specifications, and regulations followed, describe the unmeasured variables that can affect the accuracy and/or reliability of determinations, indicate any uncertainties or deviations from common practice, and report information that could affect the analyses, interpretation or use of the data. For less structured field activities, such as indirect discharge measurements or gage datum checks, available forms provide only recording space and special effort is required to assure that notes are appropriate, complete, and accurate.

Field personnel are responsible for ensuring that field measurements and observation notes are recorded in an acceptable format as a permanent record. Field notes are neat, readable, and leave no doubt about interpretation. All information is recorded as it is collected and never documented from memory. All original observations on these forms are saved and not altered. Original data can be corrected by crossing the value out then writing the correct value. Examples of information on a discharge-measurement form that is derived from original data, but not in itself original data, include the total discharge on the front sheet and mean gage height. Derived data can be erased for the purpose of correction.

North Florida Program policy ensures that all discharge measurements are calculated in their entirety before field personnel leaves the field site, unless emergency evacuation is required for reasons of safety. Information required to be included by field personnel on the measurement note sheet includes, at minimum, the initials and last name of all field-party members, station name, station number, date, times associated with gage readings and other pertinent observations.

Notations associated with miscellaneous surface-water data-collection activities are to be documented on miscellaneous notes. All miscellaneous notes are required to include, at minimum, initials and last name of field-party members, station name, station number, date, time associated with observations, purpose of the site visit.

A review of field note sheets is required as part of the annual surface-water records review by field personnel, the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Deficiencies in the content, accuracy, clarity, or thoroughness of field notes are identified and communicated to appropriate field personnel by written or oral means by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. The deficiencies are remedied by providing specific instructions to individuals who fail to record notations that meet USGS and North Florida Program standards.

Acceptable Equipment

North Florida Program uses equipment which has been approved by WRD for the measurement of surface-water discharge. An array of acceptable equipment for measuring discharge includes current meters, timers, wading rods, bridge cranes, tag lines, and others (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 82; and Smoot and Novak, 1968). Although an official list of acceptable equipment is not available, Buchanan and Somers (1969), Carter and Davidian (1968), and Edwards and Glysson (1988) discuss the equipment used by the U.S. Geological Survey.

North Florida Program personnel commonly use the Price AA current meter and the Price pygmy current meter for measuring surface-water discharge. Methods followed by North Florida Program personnel for inspecting, repairing, and cleaning these meters are described in Smoot and Novak (1968, p. 9), Rantz and others (1982, p. 93), and Buchanan and Somers (1969, p. 7).

Field personnel who use the equipment are responsible for its maintenance and accuracy (OSW memorandum 89.07). A timed-spin test made a few minutes before a measurement does not ensure that the meter will not become damaged or fouled during the measurement. Field personnel must assess apparent changes in velocity or visually inspect the meter periodically during the measurement to ensure that the meter continues to remain in proper operating condition.

Office spin tests.—North Florida Program policy ensures that office spin tests are required prior to each field trip or at least once a quarter. Spin-test results are documented in a log that is maintained for each instrument, and that lists all spin tests for all current meters in chronological order. The log is located in each field office. This log is part of the archived data of WRD (OSW memorandum 89.07). Repairs are made to meters when deficiencies are identified through the spin test or inspection. Review of this log by NUC is required at least annually. If deficiencies are observed during this review of the log, the field person is informed through oral or written communication and the problem is corrected immediately. An overall review of the log is performed by the NUC or Surface-Water Specialist during annual program review and any deficiencies are promptly corrected by field personnel.

In addition to the timed-office spin tests, field personnel are required to perform a field spin test and inspect the meter before and after each measurement to ensure that the meter is in good condition, that the cups spin freely, and the cups do not come to an abrupt stop. Descriptive notations are made at the appropriate location on the field-note sheet concerning the meter condition, such as “OK” or “free” or other such comments. To ensure that field personnel carry out their responsibilities to maintain the equipment they use, the equipment is inspected by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist during annual review. Any deficiencies are promptly corrected by field personnel.

Indirect Measurements

In many situations, especially during flooding, it is impossible or impractical to measure peak discharges by means of a current meter. There may not be sufficient warning for personnel to reach the site to make a direct measurement, or physical access to the site during the event may not be feasible. Indirect measurements of discharge are directed by the District Flood Specialist assisted by other qualified personnel of the Hydrologic Surveillance Section. The District Flood Specialist is responsible for ensuring that indirect measurement computations are made according to appropriate TWRI procedures or to recommend alternative procedures when established methods are not possible due to unusual physical conditions. All indirect measurements are reviewed by the District Surface-Water Specialist; and those made by methods that substantially depart from established procedures are also reviewed by the Regional Surface-Water Specialist.

A peak discharge determined by indirect methods is, in many situations, the best available means of defining the upper end of the stage-discharge relation at a site. Because extrapolation of a stage-discharge relation, or rating, beyond twice the measured discharge at a gaging station is undesirable and may be unreliable, discharge measurements made by indirect methods during periods of high flows are important forms of data that can be used to determine the upper end of the rating (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 334).

North Florida Program personnel follow procedures for indirect measurements presented in Benson and Dalrymple (1967). That report includes policies and procedures related to site selection, field survey, identification of high-water marks, the selection of roughness coefficients, computations, and the written summary. North Florida Program personnel also follow procedures for measurement of peak discharge by indirect methods presented in Rantz and others (1982, p. 273).

In addition to the general procedures presented in Benson and Dalrymple (1967), the North Florida Program personnel follow guidelines presented in other reports that describe specific types of indirect measurements suited to specific types of flow conditions. The slope-area method is described in Barnes (1967) and Dalrymple and Benson (1967). The slope-area method used a roughness coefficient, Manning's "n," in the determination of discharge. Procedures for selecting the roughness coefficient are described in Arcement and Schneider (1989). The slope-area computation (SAC) program, as described in OFR 94-360 (Fulford, 1994), is available to assist in computations of peak discharge with the slope-area method and is discussed in OSW memorandum 97.01. Procedures for the determination of peak discharge through culverts, based on a classification system which delineates six types of flow, is described in Bodhaine (1982). The culvert-analysis program (CAP), as described in OFR 95-137 (Fulford, 1995), is available to assist in computations of peak discharge at culverts and is discussed in OSW memorandums 96.04 and 97.01. At sites where open-channel width contractions occur, such as flow through a bridge structure, peak discharge can be measured with methods described in Matthai (1967) and with the Water-Surface Profile Computation model (WSPRO) (Shearman, 1990).

Determinations of water-surface profiles along a stream channel in association with selected discharges are made when studies are performed that involve delineations of flood plains or when extensions are made to stage-discharge relations at streamflow sites, when needed. North Florida Program personnel are required to follow the procedures associated with step-backwater methods described in Davidian (1984). The computer-based tool used for assisting in the computations of water-surface profiles with step-backwater methods, WSPRO, is discussed in OSW memorandum 87.05.

General guidelines that are followed by the North Florida Program when making indirect measurements include those discussed in OSW memorandum 92.10 and in Shearman (1990). Violation of more than one of the general guidelines does not necessarily invalidate an indirect measurement (OSW memorandum 92.10). The decision to invalidate an indirect measurement is based on the application, knowledge, and experience of the Surface-Water Specialist in reviewing or in computing the measurement.

The Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for ensuring that indirect measurements are performed correctly. A review of procedures and documentation is required to be performed on each indirect measurement by the District Surface-Water Specialist or Regional Surface-Water Specialist before finalization of the discharges are placed into any publication or peak-flow files. If deficiencies are found during the review, proposed solutions are communicated by the Surface-Water Specialist to the person that computed the measurement. This person is responsible for ensuring that the corrective actions are taken and that these actions correct the deficiencies. Measurements that are questionable and difficult to assess are reviewed by specialists outside the District, and the District Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for ensuring that deficiencies identified by the outside party are corrected.

The Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for determining when and where indirect measurements are made. As a general rule, indirect measurements are made at sites when the peak flow at a site is estimated to be at least twice the discharge of the greatest measured flow, or it is essential that a peak discharge be determined.

Trained personnel are responsible for identifying and flagging high-water marks. Because the quality and clarity of high-water marks are best soon after a flood, personnel traveling in the field are required to have materials available in their field vehicles such as nails and plastic markers, spray paint, paint sticks, survey flagging, survey stakes, and other items as necessary for flagging these marks. Selection of a suitable reach of channel is an extremely important element in making an indirect measurement. Therefore, the stream reach for indirect measurements at specified ranges of stage, at some streamflow-gaging-station sites, has been preselected, and that information has been included in the station description.

After each indirect measurement is computed, the graphs, field notes and data, plotted profiles, maps, calculations or computer output, and written analysis associated with the measurement are checked by the Surface-Water Specialist. The information is organized into a folder labeled with all pertinent data and filed in the station or historical indirect measurement files.

The responsibility of maintaining the accuracy of the peak-flow data files, including computer data-base files, lies within the North Florida Program (OSW memorandum 92.10). The Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for ensuring that appropriate indirect-measurement results are entered into the peak-flow files. The Surface-Water Specialist and HSSC are responsible for ensuring that the peak-flow files are correct. For further discussion on the update and review of the peak-flow files, refer to the section entitled "Data-Base Management."

Crest-Stage Gages

Crest-stage gages (CSG) are used as tools throughout the WRD for determining peak stages at otherwise ungaged sites, confirming peak stages at selected sites where recording gages are located, confirming peak stages where pressure transducers are used, and determining peak stages along selected stream reaches or other locations, such as upstream and downstream from bridges and culverts. The OSW requires quality-assurance procedures comparable to those used at continuous-record stations for the operation of crest-stage gages and for the computation of annual peaks at crest-stage gages (OSW memorandum 88.07).

The operation of crest-stage gages is part of the surface-water program for the Florida District. The North Florida Program office follows procedures in the operation of crest-stage gates as presented in Rantz and others (1982, p. 9, 77, 78). One or more gages are maintained at each selected site where peak water-surface elevations are required on a stream. Upstream and downstream gages are maintained at culverts or other structures where water-surface elevations are required to compute flow through the structure and to establish the resulting type of flow.

Except at sites where crest-stage gages are used only to confirm or determine peak stages, stage-discharge relations are developed in association with the gage based on direct or indirect high-water measurements. Direct or indirect measurements are obtained as site conditions warrant to verify or adjust the rating. Levels are run to the gage every 3 years or as soon as possible after significant changes in the gage because of damage to the gage, reconstruction, or other such situation. When extremely high peaks occur, an outside high-water mark to confirm the gage reading is found when possible, described on the note sheet, and flagged by a durable indicator so that the elevation of the high-water mark (HWM) can be determined the next time levels are run.

Field observations are written on CSG forms or miscellaneous field sheets. All field notes are required to include, at minimum, initials and last name of field personnel, station name, station number, date, time of observation, current stage, HWM elevation on stick, and outside HWM, if found.

Field personnel involved in site visits to gage locations, the HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist, are responsible for ensuring that correct data-collection procedures at CSGs are used. Review of data-collection procedures and data processing is carried out by each responsible field person and the Surface-Water Specialist at least once a year as part of the station analysis. When a deficiency in data-collection activities is identified, the problem is remedied by proposed solutions communicated by the Surface-Water Specialist to the responsible field person. This person is responsible for ensuring that the corrective actions are taken and that these actions correct the deficiencies. A corrected CSG analysis form is kept in the file folder and reviewed by the HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist before publication in the Annual Data Report for Northwest Florida.

Policies and procedures for computation of peak discharges at crest-stage gages and associated documentation are presented in the section entitled "Processing and Analysis of Stage and Streamflow Data."

Artificial Controls

Artificial controls, including broad-crested weirs, thin-plate weirs, and flumes, are built in stream channels for the purpose of simplifying the procedure of obtaining accurate records of discharge (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 12). Such structures serve to stabilize and constrict the channel at a section, reducing the variability of the stage-discharge relation.

Artificial controls are used at a few gaging stations maintained by the Florida District. In situations where artificial controls are installed as permanent structures, North Florida Program policy requires that stage-discharge relations are determined by making current-meter measurements throughout the range of stage, relying on the design rating when current-meter measurements cannot be made. Portable weir plates and flumes are not currently used by North Florida Program personnel. These portable device applications, if used, would be in accordance with the methods described in Buchanan and Somers (1969, p. 57) and Rantz and others (1982, p. 263).

The HSSC and/or Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for ensuring the correct design and installation of artificial controls for the North Florida Program gaging stations. When installing an artificial control, the North Florida Program personnel use the criteria for selecting the various types of controls, principles governing their design, and the attributes considered to be desirable in such structures (Carter and Davidian, 1968, p. 3; Rantz and others, 1982, p. 15 and 348; and Kilpatrick and Schneider, 1983, p. 2 and 44).

When field inspections of artificial controls are performed, specific information pertaining to control conditions are written on the field note sheets for the purpose of assisting in analysis of the surface-water data. These notes include comments concerning scour or fill of the streambed immediately upstream from the control, leakage, or other pertinent information that would affect the accuracy of the artificial control structure. When problems pertaining to artificial controls are encountered by field personnel the HSSC or Surface-Water Specialist should be contacted in attempting to solve a non-routine problem.

Flood Conditions

Flood conditions present problems that otherwise do not occur on a regular basis. These problems can include difficulties in gaining access to a streamflow gage or measuring site because roads and bridges are flooded, closed, or destroyed. Debris in the streamflow can damage equipment and present dangers to personnel collecting the data. Rapidly changing stage or conditions requiring measurements to be made at locations some distance away from the gage can create problems in associating a gage height to a measured discharge.

The North Florida Program maintains a Flood Plan document so that high-priority surface-water data associated with flood conditions are collected correctly and in a timely manner. The Flood Plan describes responsibilities before, during, and after a flood, informational-reporting procedures, and field-activity priorities. The Flood Plan serves as a central reference for emergency communications, telephone numbers for key North Florida Program personnel and codes for accessing streamflow gages equipped with telemetry.

The HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for ensuring that the Flood Plan includes all appropriate information, including updated information. The Flood Plan is reviewed every 2 years or after a major flood event by the HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist. A copy of the Flood Plan is provided to each field person. Each individual that receives a copy of the plan keeps copies in their office and/or in their field truck. The HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for ensuring that individuals that receive a copy of the plan are knowledgeable on the content of the Flood Plan.

During a flood, coordination of flood activities for the North Florida Program area is performed by the North Florida Program Chief, HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. For personnel that are not already in the field, their first responsibility during flood conditions is to come to the office with the intent of going in the field for an extended period of time. Field assignments will be made by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. The first responsibility of personnel that are already in the field during flood conditions is to call the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist to report related flood information. Personnel who arrive at a gaging station to find that a flood has already peaked are responsible for calling in information about flood stage and making a discharge measurement, then proceeding to find and document high-water marks. The North Florida Program personnel apply methods discussed in Rantz and others (1982, p. 60) for determining peak stage at gaging stations.

North Florida Program personnel follow policies and procedures stated in a number of publications and memoranda when collecting surface-water data during floods. Techniques for current-meter measurements of flood flow are presented in Rantz and others (1982, p. 159 to 170). Procedures for identifying high-water marks for indirect discharge measurements are presented in Benson and Dalrymple (1967, p. 11). Adjustments applied to

make measured flow hydraulically comparable with recorded gage height when discharge measurements are made a distance from the gaging station are presented in OSW memorandum 92.09 and in Buchanan and Somers (1969, p. 54). Personnel should address questions about particular policies or procedures related to flood activities, or needs for further training in any aspect of flood-data collection, to the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

The North Florida Program Chief, HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for the review of North Florida Program activities related to floods. This review assures that guidelines and priorities stated in the Flood Plan are followed and that the guidelines appropriately address North Florida Program requirements for obtaining flood data in a safe and thorough manner. If deficiencies are identified, they are remedied by the HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist.

Low-Flow Conditions

Streamflow conditions encountered by North Florida Program personnel during periods of low flow are typically quite different from those encountered during periods of medium and high flow. Low-flow discharge measurements are made to define or confirm the low end of stage-discharge relations for gaging stations, as part of seepage runs to identify channel gains or losses, and to help in the interpretation of other associated data. Additionally, low-flow measurements are made to define the relation between low-flow characteristics in a basin and those of a nearby basin for which more data are available (OSW memorandum 85.17).

In many situations, low flows are associated with factors that reduce the accuracy of discharge measurements. These factors include algae growth that impedes the free movement of current-meter buckets, larger percentages of the flow moving in the narrow spaces between debris on over very shallow areas. When natural conditions are in the range considered by the field personnel to be undependable, the cross section is physically improved for measurement by removal of debris, construction of dikes to reduce the amount of nonflowing water, or other such efforts (Buchanan and Somers, 1969, p. 39). The channel modification should not be performed as to affect the recorded stage at the gage, if possible. After modification of the cross section, the flow is allowed to stabilize before the discharge measurement is initiated.

North Florida Program policy requires that point-of-zero-flow (PZF) measurements be made by field personnel for all low-flow wading measurements where unstable control conditions exist. PZF's should also be collected at new gaged sites as flow conditions warrant for use in the rating and shift applications. Control conditions should be noted as part of measurement requirements.

The individual responsible for ensuring that North Florida Program personnel use appropriate equipment and procedures during periods of low flow is the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Determination that appropriate procedures are used for data-collection activities during low-flow conditions is accomplished by reviewing low-flow measurements and other field activities by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. The HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for providing answers to questions from North Florida Program personnel pertaining to data collection during periods of low flow.

Cold-Weather Conditions

Surface-water activities in this North Florida Program seldom include making streamflow-discharge measurements during cold weather conditions. Cold temperatures, wind, snow, and ice can create difficulties in collecting data. These factors also can create safety hazards to field personnel and the public. The highest priority

in collecting streamflow data during winter periods is employee safety. The responsibility for ensuring the availability of correct safety equipment and procedures for surface-water data-collection activities during periods of winter conditions is held by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF STAGE AND STREAMFLOW DATA

The computation of streamflow records involves the analysis of field observations and field measurements, the determination of stage-discharge relations, adjustment and application of those relations, and systematic documentation of the methods and decisions that were applied. Streamflow records are computed and published for each gaging station annually (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 544).

This section of the QA Plan includes descriptions of procedures and policies pertaining to the processing and analysis of data associated with the computation of streamflow records. The procedures followed by the North Florida Program coincide with those described in Rantz and others (1982) and in Kennedy (1983).

Measurement and Field Notes

The gage-height information, discharge information, control conditions, and other field observations written by personnel onto the measurement note sheets and other field note sheets form the basis for records computation for each gaging station. Measurements and field notes that contain original data are required to be entered into the measurement file immediately upon returning to the office.

Measurements and other field notes for the water year that are currently being computed are filed in the primary station folder or in the current water year measurement file drawer. Measurements and notes for previous water years are filed in the historical files. Most of the historical discharge measurements obtained prior to 1970 have been archived at the Federal Record Center in Atlanta, Ga., measurements are to be stored indefinitely (Hubbard, 1992).

North Florida Program policy requires that all discharge measurements are checked. The measurements are checked by reviewing the mathematics and other items listed in Kennedy (1983, p. 7). The corrected measurement data are entered into computer files by the person that checked the measurement using standard USGS software. A paper copy of summary information is filed in the office files and in station field folders.

Continuous Record

Surface-water gage-height data are collected as continuous record (60-, 30-, 15-, or 5-minute time interval) in the form of electronic transmissions by satellite, and electronic data loggers. Streamflow records are computed by converting gage-height record to discharge record through application of stage-discharge relations. Ensuring the accuracy of gage-height record is, therefore, a necessary component of ensuring the accuracy of computed discharges.

Gage-height record is assembled for the period of analysis in as complete a manner as possible. Periods of inaccurate gage-height data are identified and corrected (see the section "Datum corrections, gage-height corrections, and shifts") or deleted as appropriate and as determined by the NUC. Items included in the assembly of gage-height record and procedures for processing the data are discussed in Kennedy (1983, p. 6), and Rantz and others (1982, p. 560 and 587).

Observer records are entered into the station database and stored. Observer information is compared to the continuously recorded station data and used in analysis of the continuous record. Periods of missing record or questionable record are replaced with data from backup recorders where available. The authority and responsibilities associated with long-term storage of surface-water data and ensuring the integrity of that historical data are discussed in the section entitled "Data-Base Management."

Records and Computation

Computation of streamflow data for each station are normally computed each year by the field person that is responsible for the data collection activities at that site. All records for each station are checked by other field personnel or the NUC using a records computation checklist.

Procedures for Working and Checking Records

Procedures for ensuring the thoroughness, consistency, and accuracy of streamflow records are described in this section of the QA Plan. The goals, procedures, and policies presented in this section are grouped in association with the separate components that are included in the records-computation process.

Gage Height

The accuracy of surface-water discharge records depends on the accuracy of discharge measurements, the accuracy of rating definition, and the completeness and accuracy of the gage-height record (OSW memorandum 93.07). Computation of streamflow records includes ensuring the accuracy of gage-height record by comparisons of gage-height readings made by use of independent reference gages, comparison of inside and outside gages, examination of high-water marks, comparisons of the redundant recordings of peaks and troughs by use of maximum and minimum indicators, examination of data obtained at crest-stage gages, and confirmation or updating of gage datums by levels.

Records computation includes examination of gage-height record to determine if the record accurately represents the water level of the body of water being monitored. Additionally, it includes identifying periods of time during which inaccuracies have occurred and determining the cause for those inaccuracies. When possible and appropriate, inaccurate gage-height data are corrected. When corrections are not possible, the erroneous gage-height data are documented in writing (station analysis) and are removed from the set of data used for streamflow records computation after approval by the NUC. All data are reviewed by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

Levels

Errors in gage-height data caused by vertical changes in the gage or gage-supporting structure can be measured by running levels. Gages can be reset or gage readings can be adjusted by applying corrections based on levels (Kennedy, 1983, p. 6) and TWRI 3-A19 (Kennedy, 1990).

Procedures for computing records and completing level information for each station include: ensuring that the level-notes front sheet is completed for each set of levels, checking level notes, ensuring that the level information is listed in the historical levels summary, and ensuring that information was applied appropriately as

datum corrections. The person computing the record is required to check field notes for indications that the gages were reset correctly by field personnel. The person computing the records makes appropriate adjustments to the gage-height record by applying datum corrections.

Rating

The development of the stage-discharge relation, also called the rating, is one of the principal tasks in computing discharge record. The rating is usually the relation between gage height and discharge (simple rating). Ratings for some special sites involve additional factors such as rate of change in stage or fall in slope reach (complex ratings) (Kennedy, 1983, p. 14).

North Florida Program personnel follow procedures for the development, modification, and application of ratings that are described in Kennedy (1984). North Florida Program personnel also follow guidelines pertaining to rating and records computation that are presented in Kennedy (1983, p. 14) and in Rantz and others (1982, Chap. 10-14 and p. 549).

For each gaging station, the most recent digital rating table can be obtained by retrieving the rating from the North Florida Program computer database or a paper copy from the current files for each station. A graphical plot of the most recent rating can be obtained from the current rating file drawers in the North Florida Program office or by using the standard USGS database software for simple ratings.

The NUC and/or HSSC check and review each rating as part of the annual station analysis to ensure accuracy in the development, documentation, and application of each rating. Standard procedures as described in TWRI 3-A8 (Buchanan and Summers, 1969), and TWRI 3-A10 (Kennedy, 1984) pertaining to rating development and applications are followed in data computations. All measurements are plotted on the current rating plot as standard procedure for data analysis. When personnel have questions pertaining to ratings, the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for providing answers. North Florida Program policy requires that new ratings are checked before copies of the ratings are sent outside the office.

Datum Corrections, Gage-Height Corrections, and Shifts

A correction applied to gage-height readings to compensate for the effect of settlement or uplift of the gage is usually measured by levels and is called a "datum correction" (Kennedy, 1983, p. 9). Datum corrections are applied to gage-height record in terms of magnitude (in feet) and in terms of when the datum change occurred. In the absence of any evidence indicating exactly when the change occurred, the change is assumed to have occurred gradually from the time the previous levels were run, and the correction is prorated with time (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 545). Datum corrections are applied when the magnitude of the vertical change is equal to or greater than 0.02 foot.

A correction applied to gage-height readings to compensate for differences between the recording gage and the base (reference) gage is called a "gage-height correction" (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 563). These corrections are applied in the same manner as datum corrections by use of the same computer software. Gage-height corrections are applied so the recorded data are made to agree with reference gage data. These corrections are applied when the difference between the recording gage and the base gage is equal to or greater than 0.02 foot.

A correction applied to the stage-discharge relation, or rating, to compensate for variations in the rating is called a shift. Shifts reflect the fact that stage-discharge relations are not permanent but vary with time, either gradually or abruptly, because of changes in the physical features that form the control at the gaging station

(Rantz and others, 1982, p. 344). Shifts can be applied to vary in magnitude with time and/or with stage (Kennedy, 1983, p. 35). Most shifts are applied as variable-stage adjustments in the North Florida Program database applications software. Generally, shifts are applied if the discharge measurements are more than 5 percent from the current rating. However, factors such as stream conditions under which the measurement was made can affect when and how the application is determined. Judgement and experience of field personnel are used in shift applications. Rating development, application, and documentation are checked and reviewed by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Review of each shift application by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist ensure that stage shifts perform as expected.

Datum corrections, gage-height corrections, ratings, and shifts applications are documented as part of the annual station analysis process following the above guidelines. Paper copies of calculations, notes, and diagrams are maintained with each station analysis. Each station record is checked to ensure proper transitions from one water year to the next.

Hydrographs

A daily mean discharge hydrograph graphically displays daily mean discharges as a function of time. The date is plotted along the horizontal axis and the discharge is plotted along the logarithmic vertical axis. When computing station records, this hydrograph is a useful tool in identifying periods of erroneous information such as incorrect shifts or datum corrections. Additionally, hydrographs are helpful when estimating discharges for periods of undefined stage-discharge relation such as during backwater or ice conditions and in estimating discharges for periods of missing record.

Information placed on the hydrograph for each station includes, as a minimum, station name, station number, water year, plot of daily mean discharge data, plots of measurements, and also may include indications of datum corrections and shifts, and/or streamflow stations with which the hydrograph was compared. Each hydrograph is checked as part of the annual station analysis process.

Hydrograph comparisons assist the North Florida Program personnel in identifying potential problems that may have been overlooked in the normal computation procedures (Rantz and others, 1982). The hydrograph is used in downstream analysis of stations in the same or adjacent basin as a tool for ensuring the quality of computed discharge record. The hydrographs are filed in the station folder during the computation process and are stored in the historical station file when computations for the water year are completed. The HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist provide guidance when there are questions concerning hydrographs.

Station Analysis

A complete analysis of data collected, procedures used in processing the data, and the logic upon which the computations were based is documented for each year of record for each station to provide a basis for review and to serve as a reference in case questions arise about the records at some future date (Rantz and others, 1982, p. 580). Topics discussed in detail in the station analysis include location, equipment, hydrologic conditions, gage-height record, datum and gage-height corrections, rating, discharge, special computations, remarks, and recommendations as discussed by Rantz and others (1982, p. 582) and Kennedy (1983, p. 46). The station analysis is written by field personnel responsible for the data collection operations of the station during the year.

The North Florida Program office has specific steps to be used in computing, checking and reviewing data included in the station analysis. The HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist perform checks and final reviews for each station; these reviews are filed in the historical files after completion. Each person performing station

analysis is required to include a consistent content for station analysis, ensure that the checker can readily obtain and check the document, and ensure that the document is properly stored for future reference even during periods of procedural and computer-equipment transitions. All pertinent streamflow data, such as station analyses, computer printouts of shifts and datum corrections, graphs of variable-shift diagrams, and hydrograph are placed in individual permanent station file folders for archival. The NUC is responsible for ensuring that station analyses are prepared and stored properly.

Furnished Records

Surface-water data collected under the supervision of other agencies, organizations, or institutions are received by the North Florida Program. When received, these data are used in the annual data report publication and may be used for comparison of computed streamflow data for specific stations.

If data furnished by other organizations, agencies, or institutions are received by the North Florida Program office, the data are checked and compared with other station data, if possible. The HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist are responsible for checking the data and assure that the data are in conformance with WRD standards. If errors in the data are suspected, the furnishing agency is contacted to determine if an error has been made. The HSSC or NUC are responsible for contacting the furnishing agency. Data published from another agency are not normally archived as permanent record in the North Florida Program data base.

Daily Values Table

With few exceptions, for each gaging station operated by the USGS a discharge value is determined and stored for each day. The daily values table generated by use of the records-computation software represents the mean daily discharge values stored in the data base for each day of the water year.

The daily values table are used during records computation to ensure the quality of the data. The tables are used to cross check values written on primaries or plotted on the hydrograph, and to ensure that proper discharge values have been stored. The table is used to check the final manuscript before the data are published. A paper copy of the daily values table is stored for each station file folder for future reference.

Manuscript and Annual Report

When records computation for the water year has been completed and the data collected and analyzed by North Florida Program personnel, the surface-water data for that water year are published along with other data in the Northwest Florida District's annual data report. The annual data report is part of the series titled "U.S. Geological Survey Water-Data Reports." Information presented in the annual data report includes daily discharge values during the year, extremes for the year and period of record, and various summary statistics. Additionally, manuscript station descriptions are presented. Information contained in the manuscript includes physical descriptions of the gage and basin, history of the station and data, and statements of cooperation.

The North Florida Program office follows the basic guidelines presented in the report, "WRD Data Reports Preparation Guide," by Charles E. Novak (1985) and OSW memorandum 92.07 (summary statistics memo) to prepare and publish the annual data report. Each station is checked by someone other than the person who computed and wrote the station analysis. The final review of each station before inclusion in the annual data report is done by the NUC or Surface-Water Specialist. Final review of the data and publication is done by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Proof copy of the report is checked by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

North Florida Program Checkoff List

Office checkoff list(s) for each station are maintained with the current data files to track the progress of the station analysis procedures during the water year. The checkoff list is a means of tracking the status of records computation for each station and ensuring that errors do not occur by omitting the necessary procedural steps. The checkoff list is self-explanatory and is completed by the person computing, checking and reviewing the station data. The list(s) are filed in the permanent station folder.

Review of Records

After streamflow records for each station have been computed and checked, records for all of the gaging stations are reviewed by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. The goal of the review is to ensure that proper methods were applied throughout the process of obtaining the surface-water data and computing the record. If deficiencies are identified during the record review, the individual responsible for compiling the station analysis data are notified in writing or verbally. The individuals are responsible for correcting identified deficiencies, and to re-document the station data as necessary. If questions arise concerning the validity of the identified deficiencies, those questions are resolved by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

Crest-Stage Gages

Records for crest-stage gages are computed with goals and procedures similar to those for other gaging stations. The field notes are examined for correctness and accuracy. Peak stages recorded by crest-stage gages are cross referenced with other available information; the dates of the peaks are determined by analyzing available precipitation data and peak data from recording gages within the same basin or from nearby basins.

A discussion on the policies and procedures used for field aspects of collecting data at crest-stage gages is included in the section entitled "Collection of Stage and Streamflow Data." The discussion in this section describes the analysis and office documentation of crest-stage data. This section does not pertain to data collected at crest-stage gages installed solely for the purpose of confirming peak stages at sites where manometer or pressure-transducer gages are used.

At sites where crest-stage gages are used to compute peak discharges, an initial stage-discharge relation, or rating, is developed for the site by direct or indirect high-water measurements. The rating is verified or adjusted on the basis of subsequent direct or indirect high-water measurements.

For each station, a list of all measurements is maintained and each measurement is assigned a chronological number. For each station, a graphical plot and table of the current rating along with each recent and each notably high stage-discharge measurement are contained in each station folder and made readily available to those who check and review the station record. These data are all stored in the North Florida Program computer data base. Current station descriptions and a summary of levels are maintained in the station folders and in electronic form on the computer. A brief station analysis is written each year describing computation of the annual peak, identifying which rating was used and the type of flow condition, and describing how the dates of the peaks were determined.

Responsibility for ensuring the correct computation of annual peaks at crest-stage gages is held by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Review of the crest-stage gage computations is performed by the HSSC and NUC for all stations. When incorrect actions or procedures are identified during the review, the problems are corrected by the HSSC, NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist.

Responsibility for updating the Peak-Flow File promptly after peak data have been finalized is held by the HSSC. A current listing of annual peaks is maintained in the station folder and/or on computer for review purposes (Office of Surface Water memorandum 88.07).

OFFICE SETTING

Maintaining surface-water data and related information in a systematic and organized manner increases the efficiency and effectiveness of data-analysis and data-dissemination efforts. Good organization of files reduces the likelihood of misplaced information; misplaced data and field notes can lead to analyses based on inadequate information, with a possible decrease in the quality of analytical results.

This section of the QA Plan includes descriptions of how station folders, reference maps, levels documentation, and other information related to surface-water data are organized and maintained. Additionally, this section provides an overview of how work activities are designed to be carried out within the office setting.

The North Florida Programs office and other Florida Subdistrict offices each maintain an organized file system and a computer data base is available for all gaging stations in Florida. Each office has current and historical files for each gaging station in their area.

Work Plan

Routine field activities are assigned and scheduled by the HSSC or NUC. Trips are run at a frequency that reflects the need to define or verify station ratings; but are conducted at a minimum frequency of every eight weeks. Work load is based on experience and knowledge of the field personnel, but are normally distributed as equally as possible. Beyond normal data-collection activities, it is very important that plans be formulated to cover extreme hydrologic events. The North Florida Program Flood Plan provides basic guidance for coverage of flood events. Flood Plan implementation is supervised by the HSSC, and assisted by the NUC, or Surface-Water Specialist. Low-flow events, by their very nature, have lengthy response times and appropriate personnel have ample time to plan field activities tailored to the anticipated significance of the event. Low-flow field activities for highly significant events are directed by the HSSC with assistance from the NUC and support from Section personnel.

File Folders for Surface-Water Stations

This section describes the location and makeup of hard-copy files associated with surface-water data. Information pertaining to files maintained in computer storage are in the section entitled "Data-Base Management."

For each gaging station, a separate set of file folders are maintained for current and historical data. The current and historical files are organized alphabetically by station name and are kept in the data-section filing area. The current file folder for each station contains primary-computation printouts, graphed data of stage and discharge, recent measurements, current rating, shift and gage-height application sheets, and other pertinent data. The set of historical file folders for each station contains all previous water data and analyses data for the period of record and station description. Extraneous items are removed from the current files after records are determined by the Data Chief to be finalized each year. No historical file folders are allowed to be removed from the office.

Field-Trip Folders

The North Florida Program maintains separate folders for each field-trip area or project study area. The primary purpose of these folders is to compile maps, station descriptions, station lists, and other pertinent information, allowing field personnel to run the trips effectively at a moment's notice and with a minimum of time spent on last-minute preparations. Each field person is responsible for maintaining current information in each station folder.

Level Notes

Recent or current level notes are included in current file folders or are filed in the current data-file drawers. The level summaries are filed in the current station-file folder. All level notes are checked for accuracy and proper leveling procedures. Any deficiencies are remedied by individual field personnel as determined by the NUC.

Station Descriptions

Surface-water station descriptions are maintained for each gaging station in the current and historical file folders. Electronic files of station descriptions are compiled and maintained on the computer system. Each field person is responsible for updating and maintaining the station description for their areas. The HSSC and NUC are responsible for ensuring that folders or files are updated.

Discontinued Stations

Discontinued station file folders are maintained in the discontinued files in alphabetical order by station name. These station folders contain station descriptions, analyses, ratings, daily discharge data for each water, and other pertinent information.

Map Files

The North Florida Programs office maintains separate map file areas: drainage area maps, general topographic maps, and county maps for the State. Topographic maps are available in scales of 1:24,000, and 1:100,000; the county maps are at various scales. All maps must stay in the office because these are original informational maps (official) used in our operations. There are other topographic maps that are available for general use or field use. These maps are filed separately from the official maps. The Surface-Water Specialist is responsible for updating any information on the official office maps.

Archiving

All WRD personnel are directed to safeguard all original field records containing geologic and hydrological measurements and observations. Selected material not maintained in offices are placed in archival storage. Detailed information on what records have been removed to archival centers should be retained in the North Florida Program office (WRD memorandum 77.83). The types of original data that should be archived include, but are not limited to, recorder charts and tapes, original data and edited data, observer's notes and readings, station descriptions, analyses, and other supporting information (WRD memorandum 92.59 and Hubbard, 1992, p. 12). At this time there is an agreement between WRD and the Federal Records Centers (FRC) of the National Archives and Records Administration to archive original-data records (memorandum from the Chief, Branch of Operational Support, May 7, 1993).

Surface-water information is sent to the FRC from the North Florida Program office as determined by the HSSC or NUC. The HSSC or NUC is responsible for deciding what information is sent to the FRC, for ensuring that the information is properly packed and logged, and for ascertaining that the information is received by the FRC. Records of exactly what has been archived are maintained in the surface-water section by the HSSC or NUC. Personnel who have questions concerning archiving procedures should address their questions to the HSSC or NUC. Personnel who receive requests for information that require accessing archived records should contact the HSSC or NUC for assistance. All project chiefs are responsible for ensuring that appropriate project data are archived, and the HSSC ensures that project chiefs achieve this responsibility.

Communication of New Methods and Current Procedures

Personnel that receive training or encounter new methods or procedures are required to pass that information along to all persons directly involved in tasks that can make use of the information. Sometimes informal training is conducted by the HSSC, NUC, and/or Surface-Water Specialist to pass along information to improve the collection and analysis of stream flow data. Any new procedure is passed along to each person either in writing or verbally or both. Copies of all memorandums from WRD and OSW are given to each employee, and major points are communicated to personnel by the HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist. The memorandums may be posted as continuous reminders to section personnel. The HSSC, NUC, and Surface-Water Specialist should answer all questions and discuss procedures.

COLLECTION OF SEDIMENT DATA

Surface-water activities in the North Florida Program area include the collection, analysis, and publication of sediment data. The North Florida Program operates in adherence to policies related to sediment set forth by the OSW.

Responsibility for the sediment discipline was transferred from the Office of Water Quality (OWQ) to the OSW in 1985 (OSW memorandum 92.08). The sediment policies and procedures followed by the North Florida Program are described in selected WRD publications and in memorandums issued by OSW, OWQ, and WRD. Techniques adopted by the USGS and followed by this North Florida Program are presented in Knott and others (1992). The North Florida Program also follows procedures described in three TWRI publications for the series Chapters:

Book 3, Chapter C1—“*Fluvial Sediment Concepts*” by H.P. Guy (1970),

Book 3, Chapter C2—“*Field Methods for Measurement of Fluvial Sediment*” by H.P. Guy and V.W. Norman (1970),

Book 3, Chapter C3—“*Computation of Fluvial-Sediment Discharge*” by George Porterfield (1972).

Although no additional TWRI chapters have been written to supersede the above-mentioned reports, Open-File Report 86-531 “Field Methods for Measurement of Fluvial Sediment” by T.K. Edwards and G.D. Glysson (1988) essentially replaces Book 3, Chapter C2 (WRD memorandum 71.73, OSW memorandum 88.17, and OSW memorandum 93.01).

A summary of memorandums issued since 1971 related to sediment and sediment transport is provided in OSW memorandum 92.08. A summary of documentation that describes instrumentation and field methods for collecting sediment data is provided in OSW memorandum 93.01.

Sampling Procedures

North Florida Program personnel collect suspended-sediment data by using sampling methods that include: the single vertical method, the Equal Discharge Increment (EDI) method, the Equal Width Increment (EWI) method, and the point-sample method. For installation and use of automatic pumping-type samplers, the North Florida Program follows the criteria described in Edwards and Glysson (1988, p. 32).

Field methods for sediment sampling are documented in OSW memorandum 93.01. Water samples obtained for the analysis of sediment concentration and particle size are not composited (OSW memorandum 93.01 and OWQ memorandum 76.17). For samples that are split, the cone splitter is used (OWQ memorandum 80.17).

Guidelines for the collection and publication of bedload data are provided in OSW memorandum 90.08. This memorandum supersedes policy and guidelines provided in previous OWQ memorandums 76.04, 77.07, 79.17, and 80.07, as well as WRD memorandum 77.60. Among the policies stated in OSW memorandum 90.08, which are followed by the North Florida Program, is one stating that three cross-sectional procedures are used for bedload sampling: the Single Equal Width Increment (SEWI) method, the Multiple Equal Width Increment (MEWI) method, and the Unequal Width Increment (UWI) method. Additionally, it is stated in OSW memorandum 90.08 that it is the responsibility of the field personnel to select the procedure that is optimal for the local condition. Bedload samples in some situations are analyzed individually and in other situations are analyzed as a composite. Until sampling variability for a particular site is understood by those analyzing the data, all samples are required to be analyzed individually.

The supervisors of project personnel involved in sediment related hydrologic investigations are responsible for scheduling sediment-collection activities at specific sites. The District Water-Quality Specialist is responsible for ensuring that North Florida Program personnel use correct procedures to collect sediment data. This specialist establishes whether or not correct procedures are being used by conducting periodic reviews of sediment field trips, sample processing, and records computation. Deficiencies are remedied through in-house training by qualified staff. Answers to questions from North Florida Program personnel concerning sediment-sampling techniques are provided by the District Water-Quality Specialist or by other qualified personnel who have proper training in sediment-related disciplines.

Field Notes

North Florida Program personnel are required to fill out note sheets each time a site is visited for the purpose of sediment sampling. The employee completes the note sheet in its entirety before leaving the site. Original observations written on the note sheets are not to be erased; data are corrected by crossing out the original observations and writing the correct information near the original value. The goal of placing information on the field note sheet is to describe the equipment and methods used during the site visit as well as to describe relevant conditions or changes (OSW memorandum 91.15). For each site visit, information included on the note sheet includes, at minimum, the site identification, field personnel name(s), date, time, sampling equipment, and method, as covered in OSW memorandum 91.15.

Upon completion of each field trip, field notes are placed in office files for future reference. Field notes are checked by data section personnel other than those who collected the sediment samples.

Equipment

The field personnel who use the sampling equipment are responsible for the care and maintenance of the sediment-data-collection equipment. Major parts replacement and repair of damaged equipment is accomplished through contract with the USGS Hydrologic Instrumentation Facility at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. Minor repairs are done in-house by qualified personnel. The District Water-Quality Specialist and project personnel are responsible for ensuring that appropriate equipment is used at all sampling sites. Sampling equipment is selected based on the constituents that are being investigated, the type of analyses that are to be performed, and site conditions, including velocity and maximum depth of water. The North Florida Program follows equipment-design criteria and guidelines referenced in OSW memorandum 93.01.

Sample Handling and Storage

The quality of sediment data provided by a sediment laboratory is affected by the quality of the samples received from the field (Knott and others, 1992, p. 2). North Florida Program personnel are required to prepare sample labels, analysis instructions, and sample documentation according to guidelines presented in Knott and others (1992).

Sediment-sample containers and sediment samples are stored in the North Florida Program on-site warehouse. Samples are shipped to the sediment laboratory for sediment-concentration and sand-silt spit analyses and particle size analysis. Because sediment-sample containers are glass, they are securely taped and packed in foam-filled plastic crates for shipment to minimize the risk of breakage.

High-Flow Conditions

High-flow conditions at most streams, unless the streams are subject to the effects of backwater, are associated with high-energy conditions. The sediment flux and particle sizes associated with high flows are important factors in sediment studies conducted by the North Florida Program. To ensure that field personnel are aware of their responsibilities in obtaining sediment samples at appropriate sites during high-flow conditions, a list of sediment-sampling sites and sampling requirements are provided to appropriate field personnel by the project and section chiefs involved in sediment studies. These individuals are responsible for ensuring that sediment samples are obtained during opportunities provided by high-flow events and for ensuring that the proper sampling equipment and methods are used during high-flow conditions. The District Water-Quality Specialist and qualified project personnel are responsible for providing answers to North Florida Program personnel who have questions concerning high-flow sampling equipment or sampling procedures.

Site Documentation

A station description is prepared for each new sediment-sampling site. At sampling sites where streamflow-gaging activities occur, the description of sediment activities is included in the streamflow-gaging-station description. A list of elements included in each station description, along with an explanation of what items are included with each element, is presented in the attachment to OSW memorandum 91.15. At sites where sediment samples are collected but other streamflow data are not collected, the station descriptions are structured similarly to those for streamflow-gaging stations, and contain similar informational items (Kennedy, 1983, p. 2). At sampling sites where gage houses have been installed, station descriptions are kept in the gage house for the purpose of providing field personnel with information pertinent to sediment-sampling procedures for that particular site. Station descriptions and the five most recent station analyses are included in the field folder and are maintained in the office files.

Each description includes specific information explaining where the site samples are to be taken and what method is to be used. Recent station analyses contain pertinent information about the sampling conditions and problems that may have been recently encountered. They also are useful field references to field crews.

The responsibility of ensuring that field copies of station descriptions and recent station analyses are located at gage houses are kept current and held by field personnel assigned to regularly run specific field trips. Station descriptions are kept current by periodic review and updating by the individual that processes the sediment-station data. Station descriptions and analyses are reviewed to ensure that they are current by the section chief or qualified project personnel. These reviews are made at least once each year. When a deficiency is identified during the review of station descriptions or analyses, the deficiency is corrected and documented by the responsible field personnel.

At sampling sites with a gage houses, a log of sampling activities is kept. Information recorded in this log includes the names of the individuals who conducted the sampling, dates and times of the sample collection, and the project for which the samples were collected.

PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF SEDIMENT DATA

Sediment and associated streamflow data are compiled to produce sediment records for specific sites. Data processing of periodic measurements consists of four steps: tabulation, evaluation, editing, and verification (OSW memorandum 91.15). The North Florida Program office follows the considerations and guidelines presented in Porterfield (1972), Guy (1969), and OSW memorandum 91.15 to accomplish these four steps.

The District Water-Quality Specialist and qualified project personnel jointly hold responsibility for ensuring that appropriate procedures are correctly applied in processing sediment data. During the time the sediment data are being processed for the year by qualified personnel, field notes and work sheets for each site are maintained in appropriate office files. After the record has been completed, field notes and work sheets are maintained in office archive files.

Sediment Laboratory

A sediment laboratory is not operated in this District. Sediment samples are submitted to the USGS sediment laboratory in Louisiana according to established guidelines and procedures.

Sediment Station Analysis

A sediment station analysis is written for each sediment station operated by the North Florida Program each water year. The sediment station analysis is a summary of the sediment activities at the station for a given year. The analysis describes the coverage of sampling, the types of samples and sampling, changes that might affect sediment transport or the record, and the methods and reasoning used to compute the record. Information included in the sediment station analysis is presented in a thorough manner, such that the checker and the reviewer can determine from the analysis the adequacy of the activities in defining the record and in accomplishing the objectives defined for the station (OSW memorandum 91.15).

Elements included in each sediment station analysis are listed in OSW memorandum 91.15 along with descriptions of the elements and examples. Station analyses are filed in appropriate office files by project personnel, and are archived every 5 years.

Sediment Analysis Results

Sediment concentration, sand-silt split, and particle-size data are published in the annual data report series and additionally in open-file and interpretive project reports, where appropriate.

Sediment Data Storage

Sediment data are stored both in paper files in the North Florida Program office and in computer data base files, which is part of the USGS National Water Information System (NWIS). People responsible for ensuring that the data are properly processed and maintained include the District Water-Quality Specialist, project personnel, and database administrators. Paper and computer-file records are reviewed on an annual basis and any discrepancies are resolved between these people.

DATA-BASE MANAGEMENT

Surface-water data have been collected by personnel of the WRD and stored in computer data bases since the mid-1980's. Proper storage and maintenance of surface-water data are critical components in the effective utilization of those data. Because computer hardware and software used in the processing and storage of surface-water data are continually changing, many Districts hesitate in describing policies and procedures associated with these functions. Dealing with recurring periods of transition emphasizes the importance of having clearly assigned authority and clearly stated procedures for correctly populating, updating, reviewing, and maintaining a data base.

All final mean daily discharge data are stored in the historical daily values files on the North Florida Program computer. The NUC is responsible for ensuring that the current (provisional) data are flagged as "final" after final reviews are made and are properly stored in the local computer data base. Various types of daily surface-water data are stored locally and nationally, and are readily accessible. Other data that may be stored include unit values, daily values, peak values, sediment, and basin characteristics.

PUBLICATION OF SURFACE-WATER DATA

The act of Congress (Organic Act) that created the U.S. Geological Survey in 1879 established the Survey's obligation to make public the results of its investigations and research and to perform, on a continuing, systematic, and scientific basis, the investigation of the geologic structure, mineral resources and products of the National domain (U.S. Geological Survey, 1986, p. 4). Fulfilling this obligation includes the publication of surface-water data and the interpretive information derived from the analyses of surface-water data.

Publication Policy

The USGS and the WRD have created specific policies pertaining to publication of data and interpretation of these data. All WRD personnel, including those of this District, are required to abide by those policies. A brief summary of goals, procedures, and policies are presented in a publication guide (U.S. Geological Survey 1986, p. 4-37).

All information obtained through investigations and observations by the staff of the USGS or by its contractors must be held confidential and not be disclosed to others until the information is made available to all, impartially and simultaneously, through Director- or Regional-approved formal publication or other means of public release, except to the extent that such release is mandated by law (U.S. Geological Survey, 1986, p. 14).

With the approval by the Region or by the Director, hydrologic measurements resulting from observations and laboratory analyses, after they have been reviewed for accuracy by designated WRD personnel, have been excluded from the requirements to hold unpublished information confidential (U.S. Geological Survey, 1986, p. 15).

All interpretive writings in which the USGS has a proprietary interest, including abstracts, letters to the editor, and all writings that show the author's title and USGS affiliation, must be approved by the Director or person with designated approval authority before release for publication. The objectives of the approval review are to final-check the technical quality of the writing and to make certain that it meets USGS publication standards and is consistent with policies of the USGS and Department of the Interior. Director's or Regional report approval ensures that each publication or writing (1) is impartial and objective, (2) has conclusions that do not compromise the USGS's official position, (3) does not take an unwarranted advocacy position, and (4) does not criticize or compete with other governmental agencies or the private sector (U.S. Geological Survey, 1991, p. 10).

Types of Publications

Various types of book publications released by the USGS are available in which surface-water data and data analyses are presented. Publications of the formal series include the Water-Supply Paper, the Professional Paper, the Bulletin, the Circular, the Techniques of Water-Resources Investigations, Special Reports, and Selected Papers in the Hydrologic Sciences (U.S. Geological Survey, 1986, p. 42). Publications in the informal series include the Water-Resources Investigations Report, the Open-File Report, and the Administrative Report (U.S. Geological Survey, 1986, p. 52). Included in the Open-File Report series are data reports. Surface-water data collected by this North Florida Program are published each year in a hydrologic data report that belongs to the annual series titled "U.S. Geological Survey Water-Data Reports." Factors considered by the North Florida Program when deciding which form of publication should be utilized in presenting various types of information are presented in Green (1991, p. 14).

Review Process

Procedures for publication and requirements for manuscript review by WRD are summarized in the publication reference, Suggestions to Authors (U.S. Geological Survey, 1991, p.36-41). The North Florida Program office fulfills those requirements for review and approval of reports prior to printing and distribution. All reports written by USGS personnel in connection with their official duties must be approved by the originating Division or the Director. At least two technical reviews of each report are required by WRD (U.S. Geological Survey, 1991, p. 36). Competent and thorough editorial and technical review is the most certain way to improve and assure the high quality of the final report (Moore and others, 1990, p. 24). Principles of editorial review and responsibilities of reviewers and authors are presented in Moore and others (1990, p. 24-49).

Several steps are taken to ensure the quality of the annual data report. The main emphasis is to ensure the quality of the original copy of manuscripts and checking the original copy, and by checking the final printed report before it is distributed. Approval of the annual data report for publication is done at the North Florida Program level and distribution of the annual report via mailing lists is handled by the HSSC. The HSSC, and NUC are responsible for ensuring quality in the annual data report by detecting deficiencies, and by correcting those deficiencies.

STREAMFLOW DATA ON THE INTERNET

The release of real-time streamflow data to the public using the Internet has become widespread and has presented a host of new quality-assurance concerns. The main concerns are the ability to present these data as “error free” and final as possible within a short or reasonable time frame to the public. WRD’s responsibilities for ensuring data quality and making the public aware of its limitations has increased significantly with the dissemination of real-time streamflow data on the Internet.

One of the most critical elements in maintaining accurate real-time streamflow records is the processing of the stream-stage and discharge measurement data, rating analysis, and shift and data correction applications, as soon as practical. The North Florida Program policy is that the same procedures described earlier for routine streamflow data processing will be used to assure presentation of quality data on the Florida District Web page (<http://fl.water.usgs.gov>).

The real-time streamflow data that are presented on the public Web page are reviewed frequently to ensure their quality and to prevent the distribution of erroneous data. The North Florida Program uses both automated and manual review of procedures to meet this objective. The North Florida Program will continue to implement procedures for addressing the presentation of quality streamflow data as new and improved methods of reviewing and screening these data become available. Assigned personnel in the Hydrologic Surveillance Section and Webmaster are responsible for correcting erroneous data displayed on the web page. All data presented on the real-time web page are flagged as PROVISIONAL DATA, with an explanation on the public web page.

SAFETY

Performance of work activities in a manner that ensures the safety of personnel and others is of the highest priority for the USGS and the Florida District. Beyond the obvious negative impact unsafe conditions can have on personnel, such as accidents and personal injuries, they also can have a direct effect on the quality of surface-water data and data analysis. For example, errors may be made when an individual’s attention to detail is compromised when dangerous conditions create distractions. So that personnel are aware of and follow established procedures and policies that promote all aspects of safety, the North Florida Program communicates information and directives related to safety to all personnel by in-house training classes, memorandums, and showing videotapes. Specific policies and procedures related to safety can be found in the District Safety Plan. The Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring that each employee reads and familiarizes themselves with specific safety memorandums or manuals and attends training classes as required. Personnel who have questions or concerns pertaining to safety, or who have suggestions for improving some aspects of safety, must direct those questions, concerns, and suggestions to the Safety Officer.

TRAINING

Ensuring that personnel obtain knowledge of correct methods and procedures is a vital aspect of maintaining the quality of surface-water data and data analysis. Providing appropriate training to personnel increases the quality of work and eliminates the source of many potential errors. Most of the training is provided for personnel by the North Florida Program office as “on-the-job” type training. Other types of training pertaining to data collection and analysis procedures are accomplished by in-house training by supervisors or specialists, regional training courses, or training courses through the National Training Center. The goal of this type as well as all types of training are to ensure that field and office activities are performed in accordance with specified WRD standard practices and policies, and that these activities are performed by adequately qualified, experienced, and supervised personnel.

Requests for training and career enhancement opportunities are discussed at least annually with individuals. Formal training are requested or determined by the North Florida Program Training Officer. Regional and National training courses for each year are made available to each employee. Training for each employee is documented in their Career Development Plan and personnel files.

SUMMARY

Information included in this Surface-Water Quality-Assurance Plan documents the policies and procedures of the North Florida Program that ensure high quality in the collection, processing, storage, analysis, and publication of surface-water data. Specific types of surface-water data discussed in this report include stage, streamflow, sediment, and basin characteristics. The roles and responsibilities of North Florida Program personnel for carrying out these policies and procedures are presented, as are issues related to management of the computer data base and issues related to employee safety and training.

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APPENDIX A

Water Resources Division, Office of Surface Water and Office of Water Quality Memorandums Cited

The following memorandums were cited in this report. The memorandums are provided in their entirety in a separate report by the Office of Surface Water.

Office of Surface Water memorandum 97.01
Office of Surface Water memorandum 96.04
Office of Surface Water memorandum 93.07
Office of Surface Water memorandum 93.01
Office of Surface Water memorandum 92.11
Office of Surface Water memorandum 92.10
Office of Surface Water memorandum 92.09
Office of Surface Water memorandum 92.08
Office of Surface Water memorandum 92.07
Office of Surface Water memorandum 91.15
Office of Surface Water memorandum 91.09
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Office of Surface Water memorandum 90.08
Office of Surface Water memorandum 89.08
Office of Surface Water memorandum 89.07
Office of Surface Water memorandum 88.17

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Office of Surface Water memorandum 87.05
Office of Surface Water memorandum 85.17
Water Resources Division memorandum 92.59
Water Resources Division memorandum 77.83
Water Resources Division memorandum 77.60
Water Resources Division memorandum 71.73
Office of Water Quality memorandum 80.17
Office of Water Quality memorandum 80.07
Office of Water Quality memorandum 79.17
Office of Water Quality memorandum 77.07
Office of Water Quality memorandum 76.17
Office of Water Quality memorandum 76.04
Memorandum from the Chief, Branch of Operational
Support, May 7, 1993.

APPENDIX B

Rounding and Measurement Procedures to be Used by the North Florida Program for Computation of Discharges

Inside or Back of Measurement Sheet

Total Discharge Measured	Compute Partial Discharges and Areas to Nearest
0 - 9.99	0.001
10 - 99.99	0.01
100 - 999.9	0.1
1,000 - 9,999	1.
10,000 - 99,999	10
100,000 - 999,999	100

Velocities will be used to hundredths (0.01) except:

(a) If most of the velocities for the measurement run below 0.50 ft/sec, or

(b) If the total discharge measured is less than 10 ft³/s, then use all velocities from the meter rating table to thousandths (0.001).

Front Sheet—for Area, Discharge, Velocities, Etc.

Total Discharge Measured	Compute Partial Discharges and Areas to Nearest
0 - 9.99	0.01
10 - 99.99	0.1
100 - 999.9	1.
1,000 - 9,999	10
10,000 - 99,999	100
100,000 - 999,999	1,000

Velocity—Show velocity to nearest hundredth (0.01).

Depths for Wading Measurements

Depth, In feet	Record Reading to Nearest
Below 0.5	0.01
0.5 - 1.5	0.02
1.5 - greater	0.05 or 0.10 (as conditions warrant)

Depths for Velocity Readings

Depth, in feet	Meter and Depth Setting
0.3 - 1.5	Pygmy - 0.6
1.5 - 2.5	AA - 0.6
2.5 - greater*	AA - 0.2 and 0.8

*If the 0.8 velocity reading is greater than the 0.2 velocity reading or there is a significant difference between the two velocity readings, take an additional 0.6 velocity reading for depths greater than 3.0 ft.

Bridge and Cable Measurements

Weight and Suspension Distance (in feet)

**Use 0.2 and 0.8 depth method above;
and 0.6 depth method below depths listed (in feet)**

15 C - 0.5	2.5
30 C - 0.5	2.5
50 C - 0.55**	2.75
50 C - 0.9	4.5
75 C - 1.0	5.0
100 C - 1.0	5.0
150 C - 1.0	5.0

Suspension distances are from horizontal axis of current meter (through center of tailpiece and bucket wheel of AA meter) to bottom of weight.

**Meter at hole of C type hanger marked "15."