

Water Quality Portal Communication Plan

Introduction

The Water Quality Portal (WQP) is a cooperative service sponsored by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC), a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI). It serves water quality related data collected by over 500 state, federal, tribal, and local agencies.

The Water Quality Portal has grown to serve over 368 million results for over 959,000 stations nationally (5/7/19). The Water Quality Portal (WQP) Communication Plan provides NWQMC, the NWQMC's Water Information Strategy workgroup (WIS), and the WQP team with a strategy for prioritizing the development, implementation, and communication about the WQP.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the *Water Quality Portal Communication Plan* is to provide direction and guidance for the implementation of specific communications efforts that will:

- Increase traditional (e.g. federal and state agencies) and non-traditional data partner (e.g. citizen science groups, nonprofits) participation.
- Develop training and materials for publishing data to the Water Quality Portal
 - Including: how to publish quality data by promoting submission of supporting metadata and decreasing data ambiguity
- Develop training and materials for retrieving and utilizing data from the Water Quality Portal
- Provide overarching messages about the Water Quality Portal to be used as outreach tactics.
- Establish a communications approach for enhancements and developments to user community and advocacy groups

Approach

The approach for addressing WQP communication needs can be grouped into three basic categories:

1. Develop training and materials to maintain and increase data partners
 - a. EPA will continue to maintain the helpdesk to support users in submitting and retrieving data from the WQP.

- b. EPA will create a series of videos that walk a user through submitting data to the WQP using the Water Quality eXchange (WQX). Videos will also include troubleshooting tips for data entry issues.
 - c. EPA will create a factsheet on how to publish data to the WQP
 - d. EPA will explore methods to help node submitters maintain data flows
 - e. USGS, EPA, and the NWQMC will utilize meeting and conference opportunities to highlight the benefits of publishing data to the WQP
 - f. Developed materials will be centrally located for USGS, EPA, and the NWQMC to be used for outreach and communication.
 - g. The WQP team will work with the NWQMC to compile success stories for publishing data to the WQP.
 - h. The WQP team will work with the NWQMC to identify and target new data partners, focusing on providers that can help fill geographic and informational gaps.
 - i. The WQP team will create a Testimonial video at the NWQMC bi-annual National Monitoring Conference and present the testimonials at the end of the conference and share them on the WQP and NWQMC webpages. The testimonial video can highlight success stories and products that leverage the WQP.
2. Develop materials and trainings to retrieve and utilize data from the water quality portal
 - a. The WQP team will create a poster, slide deck and demonstration video on the WQP and how to use it.
 - b. The WQP team will publish an external article on the web services offered via the WQP
 - c. EPA will continue training and outreach on the R data tools using WQP web services
 - d. The team will create a Water Quality Portal dashboard to allow users to easily view summary statistics about data holdings and results in the WQP.
3. Establish a process to communicate updates and enhancements to user community and EPA, USGS, and the NWQMC
 - a. The WQP team will create quarterly Water Quality Portal Newsletter videos to distribute to the NWQMC to keep them abreast of new updates. These videos will be posted to the NWQMC's YouTube channel so they are available to a wide audience.
 - b. The WQP team will use WQX user community calls to share updates and enhancements to the WQP monthly.

Target Audiences

Below are the identified audiences for WQP communications. The roles/responsibilities for each of the audiences as well as their information needs are defined in Table 4-1. The target audiences represent: 1) the NWQMC/WIS leadership who serve as the WQP experts for communicating to the scientific public; 2) data submitters who provide and need to maintain data submissions to the WQP; 3) the USGS and EPA upper management which support and advocate for prioritizing the maintenance and development upon the WQP; and 4) the data users which may overlap with the NWQMC/WIS leadership, data submitters, and USGS/EPA management.

Table 4-1. Target Audiences

Audience	Role/Responsibilities	Information Needs	Message
NWQMC/WIS Membership	The NWQMC is the overarching organization for establishing Water Quality Portal Priorities and direction. The WIS is the direct information community which steers the details of the Water Quality Portal. Both organizations serve as system experts and can present at meetings and conferences to spread the WQP message.	Materials for presentations: Poster, slide decks, videos, and messaging materials. Regular updates on WQP developments Simple access to training materials Key Messages identified	*Messages focus on increasing data sharing and use
Data Submitters: new and existing	Share and maintain fully documented, quality data with the WQP.	Updates to WQX requirements (e.g. WQX 3.0) WQP updates that affect their data Training resources for submitting data Reports on the reuse of their data.	*Messages focus on data publishing changes and best practices.
USGS and EPA management	Advocating and supporting the maintenance and development of the WQP.	Benefits of the WQP Agency ROI information, including indirect and tangible benefits	*Messages focus on the benefits of hosting the WQX & WQP Highlighting case studies and data reuse publications

		Case studies and examples of integrated data use	
Data Users	Analyze data from multiple data submitters, while interpreting data quality to draw conclusions about water quality and inform decision making.	Data element definitions How to retrieve the data Information about how to obtain metadata and contact original data providers	*Messages will focus on data retrieval and web service utilization. Including the data tools.

5. Messages

Clear and consistent messaging is vital to the success of any communications strategy regardless of the complexity of the information being disseminated, or of the scope of the initiative undertaken. To leave a lasting and resonating impact and ensure overall success, a communications strategy must first determine overarching messages which will be delivered to various stakeholders. Messages will incorporate language and concepts from the [Internet of Water](#) to align with national efforts and communication.

Messages

The primary messages for the WQP are: 1) concise, informative, and captivating information about the WQP that will be delivered to inquiring stakeholders in the form of an elevator speech to encourage them to participate in the WQP; and 2) a list of messages of the overall direction of the WQP enabling conscious and deliberate communications to all stakeholders.

Table 5-1 Elevator Speeches for WQP communication efforts

Messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General elevator speech <i>The Water Quality Portal is the largest provider of water quality data in the United States. The WQP was created to bring water quality data systems together in one format to facilitate national data sharing, data reuse, and therefore resource efficiency. The portal contains data from over 400 organizations, over 368 million results at over 959K stations. USGS and EPA have created many automated data tools which pull data from the WQP to help stakeholders identify datasets and perform comprehensive analyses. Check it out at Waterqualitydata.us.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elevator speech for non-technical audience who has never heard of WQP <i>Too often we hear about government inefficiency and redundancy. Here's a success story -- The Water Quality Portal -- and it involves the most precious resource known to humankind. A federal advisory committee tasked to advise Congress about better ways to collect, store, and share water-quality data and chaired by EPA and USGS has sponsored an effort that has resulted in a</i>

fantastic resource. This database not only contains results from data-collection efforts on rivers, streams, and lakes by over 400 organizations, but links to the methods used to collect those data, providing critical information on the quality of those data. To date, the Water Quality Portal contains over 368 million results from over 959,000 sites, and these numbers are continually growing.

· Elevator speech for technical audience who has never heard of the WQP
Did you know there's a place where you can access water-quality data, including over 368 MILLION results at over 959,000 sites, collected by over 400 organizations?! It's called the Water Quality Portal, and since 2002 it has provided an ever-expanding resource where organizations can store, share, and access water-quality data for free! The Portal offers a variety of easy and intuitive ways to retrieve data including: data and geospatial web services and upstream/downstream search capability.

· Elevator speech for technical audience who has heard of WQP but does not currently use
The Water Quality Portal is the largest source for water quality data in the United States. The portal now contains data from over 400 organizations, over 368 million results at over 959K stations. Many people find value in using the portal data for academic and regulatory analyses, a simple place to point people to retrieve their data and share data across watershed projects. Would you be interested in seeing a demo of the water quality portal? Would you mind sharing why you haven't used the water quality portal yet?

· Elevator speech for technical audience who has heard of WQP and is current user
Did you know it now contains over 368 million results? Have you heard we are starting to keep track of data downloads for each organization who submits data? Soon the portal will deliver statistics on how often data is downloaded for all organizations contributing data!

6. Communication Tactics

Tactics are tasks to be implemented to support the campaign. Campaigns are broader purposes and communication opportunities for sharing information about the Water Quality Portal.

Table 6-1 lists the tactics of the WQP communications effort by campaign. Each campaign and tactic has identified purposes, key messages we must communicate, and the audience being addressed.

Table 6-1. Tactics by Campaign

Campaign	Tactic	Purpose	Key Messages	Target Audiences
Training	WQX Web training videos	To provide simple, short, and video based training on what WQX is, how to prepare data to share it with WQX, and how to submit data to the WQP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is WQX Web · How to format data · How to submit data · How to resolve submission errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Existing and future data partners

Outreach	Meeting material development	To provide NWQMC, WIS, and the WQP team with posters and presentation materials to present a consistent message to WQP stakeholders	.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional representatives (EPA regions)
Outreach	WQX user community and list serve	To communicate to the existing user community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of updates and enhancements Data use examples at multiple levels of sophistication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data submitters and users
Outreach	Conferences	To educate new and future data partners about the WQP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What the WQP is The benefits of sharing and retrieving data from the WQP How to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NWQMC conference Other water-quality related conferences
Outreach	Decision Makers and upper management	To communicate the value of participating in the portal and leveraging the portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to participate Benefits of participating Success stories (time/money saved) 	-USEPA, USGS and participating organization managers
Outreach	Social Media	Announce milestones and additions to the WQP. Drive additional traffic and communicate successes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New data providers online New features and additions Other news or success stories 	Twitter and LinkedIn account audiences. YouTube audiences may also be incorporated.