

**1SUPPORTING STATEMENT A
FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION**

**National Ground-Water Monitoring Network
Cooperative Funding Program
OMB Control Number 1028-0114**

Terms of Clearance: None

Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

The USGS is working with the Federal Advisory Committee on Water Information (ACWI) and its Subcommittee on Ground Water (SOGW) to develop and administer a National Ground-Water Monitoring Network (NGWMN). This network is required as part of Public Law 111-11, Subtitle F—Secure Water: Section 9507 “Water Data Enhancement by the United States Geological Survey”. The Network will consist of an aggregation of wells from existing Federal, State, Tribal, and local groundwater monitoring networks.

To support data providers for the National Ground-Water Monitoring Network, the USGS will be providing funding through cooperative agreements to water-resource agencies that collect groundwater data. The USGS is administering the NGWMN and has prepared a Program Announcement to allow applicants to apply for assistance through grants.gov. Form SF-424 (OMB Number 4040-0004) will be used to obtain contact information for the applicant. This information is needed to establish contact with the agency to process the award and to work together with the agency in the cooperative agreement.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection. Be specific. If this collection is a form or a questionnaire, every question needs to be justified.

The information collected will be used to select recipients of cooperative funding to data providers of the National Ground-Water Monitoring Network (NGWMN). Agencies or organizations which collect groundwater data can apply to receive cooperative funding to support them as a data provider. Applications for funding will be submitted to Grants.gov and will be forwarded to the USGS management staff. Applications will then be reviewed by the USGS NGWMN staff, the Subcommittee on Ground-Water, and the NGWMN program board. Applications will be reviewed based on merit and the current priorities of the NGWMN. Applications will be prioritized and referred back to USGS to begin funding awards.

Form SF-424 (OMB number 4040-0004) will be used to collect contact information for the agency. Forms SF-424A (OMB number 4040-0006) and SF-424B (OMB number 4040-0007) will also be required. Applications packages will be submitted as a Project Narrative attachment to Form SF-424. Budget sheets for each project year will also be submitted as attachments to

form SF-424.

The Project Narrative will include a cover sheet and the project application. The cover sheet will include the Project title, Agency name, Agency Contact Name, and Agency Contact Information (email, phone number, fax number, and mailing address) and the total amount of funding requested. The Project Application will include the following sections:

Project Summary

Overall summary of project including physical area, aquifers monitored, and type and number of wells monitored.

Description of Agency and Purpose of Monitoring

Brief description of agency and purpose of groundwater data collected.

Identification of Principal or Major Aquifers being Monitored

List principal, major or other important aquifers that are being monitored.

Description of Monitoring Networks

Provide a detailed description of existing monitoring networks with sites that may be considered for inclusion in the NGWMN.

Overview of Field Practices

Discuss any differences in field practices than those described in the NGWMN Framework Document Appendix 5.

Overview of Databases

Describe databases used to store water-level, water-quality, and lithologic data. List any fields from the list in Appendix C of the Program Announcement that you will not be able to provide to the Network.

List of Project Tasks

Provide a list of tasks for the project. Describe the approach for each task and the approximate percentage of the total project budget for each task.

Work Plan

Identify project personnel and the timeline needed to accomplish the tasks above.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden and specifically how this collection meets GPEA requirements.

Application packages will be accepted electronically through the grants.gov web site.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

This program is intended to support development and implementation of the National Ground-Water Monitoring Network. Specific information from potential data providers will be needed as part of the application package to evaluate their application. No other Federal agency will be collecting the specific information required.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The collection of information would only impact small businesses or other entities which collect groundwater data and choose to apply for cooperative funding as a data provider. Application for cooperative funding is completely voluntary.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

If we cannot collect applications from potential data providers, we will not have the information necessary to make decisions about priorities of funding and funding needs. Collection will have to occur annually in order to bring in new data providers as the Network grows. Support will also be provided to existing data providers over a two-year period. If we are unable to receive renewal applications, ongoing support could not be provided.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- * requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- * requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- * requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- * requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;
- * in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- * requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- * that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- * requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information, unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

This request contains no special circumstances.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the *Federal Register* of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and in response to the PRA statement associated with the collection over the past three years, and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the

availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every three years — even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

The 60-day FRN was published 05/14/2025 at 90 FR 20486. We did not receive any public comments.

We consulted with the individuals listed in the table to obtain their views on the information presented in our instrument. Several modifications to the format and design of the application were suggested during the testing period and these have been incorporated.

In addition to the *Federal Register* notice, we consulted with the seven (7) individuals identified in Table 8.1 who are familiar with this collection of information to validate our time burden estimates and asked for comments on the questions below:

Table 8.1

Organization	Title
Missouri Department of Natural Resources	Groundwater Section Chief
Utah Geological Survey	Senior Scientist
Groundwater Protection Council	Hydrologist
Maryland Department of Natural Resources	Program Chief
South Carolina Department of Environmental Services	Hydrologist
Nebraska Conservation and Survey Division	Survey Geologist
Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology	Senior Geologist

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Not Applicable. No awards or payment will be provided to applicants simply for applying.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

No assurance of confidentiality is given to respondents. The application along with the agency name, contact name, phone number, and email addresses collected will be shared only within the USGS program office and the NGWMN Program Board.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as

sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

The application process does not require sensitive information.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

- * Indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden, and an explanation of how the burden was estimated. Unless directed to do so, agencies should not conduct special surveys to obtain information on which to base hour burden estimates. Consultation with a sample (fewer than 10) of potential respondents is desirable. If the hour burden on respondents is expected to vary widely because of differences in activity, size, or complexity, show the range of estimated hour burden, and explain the reasons for the variance. Generally, estimates should not include burden hours for customary and usual business practices.
- * If this request for approval covers more than one form, provide separate hour burden estimates for each form and aggregate the hour burdens.
- * Provide estimates of annualized cost to respondents for the hour burdens for collections of information, identifying and using appropriate wage rate categories. The cost of contracting out or paying outside parties for information collection activities should not be included here.

Estimates of the number of applicants, time per response, and total dollar equivalent were determined as a result of communication with individuals identified in Table 8.1 who are familiar with this collection of information in order to validate our time burden estimates.

.

Estimated hours were increased from previous estimates based on more detailed analysis of historical trends and through additional information recently provided by individuals in table 8.1. The activity description was also revised to more clearly define the actual activity associated with the estimated hours.

Cost estimate for applicants were determined using a rate of \$47.20 per hour for State and local government employee from Bureau of Labor Statistics 'Employer Costs for Employee Compensation—December 2024', released March 14, 2025.

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/eccec.pdf>

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Responses</u>	<u>Estimated hours per response</u>	<u>Estimated Burden Hours</u>	<u>Estimated Dollar Equivalent</u>
<u>State/Local agency staff reads Cooperative</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>\$1,888</u>

<u>Agreement application but doesn't apply</u>				
<u>State/Local agency staff reads and then completes Cooperative Agreement application</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>1,200</u>	<u>\$56,640</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,240</u>	<u>\$58,528</u>

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual non-hour cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden already reflected in item 12.)

- * The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation, maintenance, and purchase of services component. The estimates should take into account costs associated with generating, maintaining, and disclosing or providing the information (including filing fees paid for form processing). Include descriptions of methods used to estimate major cost factors including system and technology acquisition, expected useful life of capital equipment, the discount rate(s), and the time period over which costs will be incurred. Capital and start-up costs include, among other items, preparations for collecting information such as purchasing computers and software; monitoring, sampling, drilling and testing equipment; and record storage facilities.
- * If cost estimates are expected to vary widely, agencies should present ranges of cost burdens and explain the reasons for the variance. The cost of purchasing or contracting out information collection services should be a part of this cost burden estimate. In developing cost burden estimates, agencies may consult with a sample of respondents (fewer than 10), utilize the 60-day pre-OMB submission public comment process and use existing economic or regulatory impact analysis associated with the rulemaking containing the information collection, as appropriate.
- * Generally, estimates should not include purchases of equipment or services, or portions thereof, made: (1) prior to October 1, 1995, (2) to achieve regulatory compliance with requirements not associated with the information collection, (3) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the Government, or (4) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

There is no non-hour cost burden to applicants under this collection. There is no fee for application, nor any fees associated with application requirements.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

Federal Govt cost	Year 1	160	\$11,734
-------------------	--------	-----	----------

Position	Grade	Hourly Rate	Annual Hours	Loaded Hourly Rate	Total Labor Value
<i>USGS Program Coordinator</i>	GS-13	\$48.89	80	\$73.34	\$5,867
<i>EPA Representative</i>	GS-13	\$48.89	80	\$73.34	\$5,867

The total cost to the government for this information collection is \$11, 734. The table above shows estimated costs for reviewing the application packets that will be submitted as part of cooperative agreement solicitation. The program is administered by USGS so most of the burden will be there. However, members from other Federal Agencies may be involved in the proposal review process. Hourly rates were determined from the General Schedule of the GS scale for Federal employees available at (https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2025/GS_h.pdf)/ a step level of 5 was used for each GS level to estimate the basic hourly rate. The Loaded Hourly rate is the OPM hourly rate times 1.5 to account for benefits to Federal employees.

Other expenses to Federal Government

None.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments in hour or cost burden.

Estimated hours were increased from previous estimates based on more detailed analysis of historical trends and through additional information recently provided by individuals in table 8.1.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Collection will not be published.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The expiration date will be displayed.

18. Explain each exception to the topics of the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions."

Not seeking any exceptions.