

Quality Assessment Report for Water Quality Monitoring

January – March 2024



**Prepared for the
Technical Oversight Committee**

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INTRODUCTION

This report is an assessment of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) field sampling and laboratory analysis for total phosphorus (TP) in surface water, primarily for the projects and their associated stations as shown in **Table 1** from January 1, 2024, through March 31, 2024. The analysis reflects the status of the data at the time of download and does not account for changes made to the data after May 7, 2024.

Table 1. Projects and associated stations.

Project Name	Project ID	Stations
Everglades National Park Inflows North	PIN	S12A, S12B, S12C, S12D, S333, S333N, S355A, S355B, and S356-334
Everglades National Park Inflows East	PIE	G737, S332DX, S18C, and S328
Everglades Protection Area	EVPA	LOX3, LOX4, LOX5, LOX6, LOX7, LOX8, LOX9, LOX10, LOX11, LOX12, LOX13, LOX14, LOX15, and LOX16

The Water Quality Monitoring Section (WQM) *Field Quality Manual* (SFWMD-FIELD-QM-001) and *Field Sampling Manual* (SFWMD-FIELD-FSM-001) provided the quality system requirements and the field sampling procedures followed in field sample collection, respectively, from January 1 to March 31, 2024. The Analytical Services Section’s *Chemistry Laboratory Quality Manual* (SFWMD-LAB-QM-001) provides the guidance and requirements for preparing and analyzing laboratory samples, as well as data verification and validation. The *Field Sampling Quality Assessment* and *Laboratory Analysis Quality Assessment* sections in this report provide a comprehensive evaluation and validation of the TP results for surface water samples collected from the locations and timeframe described above.

To prepare this report, a Microsoft Excel workbook named “qa_report_jan_mar_2024_data.xlsx” was also created, containing all TP results obtained from DBHYDRO, SFWMD’s corporate environmental database, for all sampling events. This includes grab samples collected for the projects/stations listed above during the period specified in this report. The Excel workbook will be referred to as the Reference Data Set (RDS) throughout this report and both of the documents are available for reference on the Everglades Technical Oversight Committee (TOC) website (<https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/toc>). TP analyses were completed at the SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory (Department of Health Identification # E46077).

If available, TP sample results for biannual laboratory proficiency testing as required by the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) or results from other laboratory performance evaluation studies completed during the period specified in this report will also be included.

FIELD SAMPLING QUALITY ASSESSMENT

SAMPLE COLLECTION

All samples were collected by WQM staff. A total of 45 sampling events were conducted that included collection of samples for the projects/locations and timeframe described in the *Introduction* to this report. A complete list of the laboratory work orders obtained from the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) for these sampling events is shown in **Table 2**. The table details the work order identifiers, work order numbers, project codes, and sample collection dates.

Table 2. Sampling events for the reporting period.

Work Order Identifier	Work Order	Project ^a	Date Collected
P148288	90174	EVPA	01/03/2024
P148031	90047	PIN	01/04/2024
P148290	90175	EVPA	01/04/2024
P146839	89467	PIE	01/04/2024
P146794	89455	PIE	01/04/2024
P148047	90054	PIE	01/09/2024
P148035	90048	PIN	01/09/2024
P148061	90061	PIE	01/09/2024
P146840	89468	PIE	01/16/2024
P146740	89422	PIN	01/16/2024
P146795	89456	PIE	01/16/2024
P146716	89416	PIN	01/23/2024
P146852	89476	PIE	01/23/2024
P146763	89439	PIE	01/24/2024
P148054	90055	PIE	01/30/2024
P148205	90130	PIE	01/30/2024
P146741	89423	PIN	01/31/2024
P148997	90505	PIE	02/06/2024
P146764	89440	PIE	02/06/2024
P146717	89417	PIN	02/07/2024
P148931	90478	PIN	02/13/2024
P148206	90131	PIE	02/14/2024
P148055	90056	PIE	02/14/2024
P148943	90484	PIN	02/20/2024
P146765	89441	PIE	02/21/2024
P148998	90506	PIE	02/21/2024
P149288	90661	EVPA	02/26/2024
P149290	90662	EVPA	02/27/2024
P148207	90132	PIE	02/28/2024
P148056	90057	PIE	02/28/2024
P148932	90479	PIN	02/28/2024
P148944	90485	PIN	03/05/2024
P149488	90766	PIE	03/06/2024
P148999	90507	PIE	03/06/2024
P148962	90496	EVPA	03/11/2024
P148964	90497	EVPA	03/12/2024
P148057	90058	PIE	03/12/2024
P148208	90133	PIE	03/12/2024
P148933	90480	PIN	03/13/2024
P148945	90486	PIN	03/19/2024
P149489	90767	PIE	03/20/2024
P149000	90508	PIE	03/20/2024
P148934	90481	PIN	03/26/2024
P148058	90059	PIE	03/26/2024
P148209	90134	PIE	03/26/2024

a. EVPA – Everglades Protection Area; PIE – Everglades National Park Inflows East; and PIN – Everglades National Park Inflows North.

During the 45 sampling events described in **Table 2**, a total of ten grab sample records for the projects/locations described in the *Introduction* indicate that a sample was not collected in most cases due to gates closed and/or the site being no flow or too shallow to collect. The grab sample identifiers and reasons these samples were rejected or not collected are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Grab samples rejected or not collected during the reporting period.

Work Order Identifier	Project ^a	Sample Identifier	Station	Date	Reason Sample Was Rejected or Not Collected ^b
89422013	PIN	P146740-13	S355B	01/16/2024	Gates closed. No flow.
89422015	PIN	P146740-15	S355A	01/16/2024	Gates closed. No flow.
89423013	PIN	P146741-13	S355B	01/30/2024	No flow during site visit.
89423015	PIN	P146741-15	S355A	01/30/2024	No flow during site visit.
90479013	PIN	P148932-13	S355B	02/27/2024	Gates closed. No flow.
90479015	PIN	P148932-15	S355A	02/27/2024	Gates closed. No flow.
90767004	PIE	P149489-4	G737	03/19/2024	Gates closed. No flow. Too shallow to collect.
90059004	PIE	P148058-4	G737	03/26/2024	Gates closed. No flow.
90481013	PIN	P148934-13	S355B	03/26/2024	Gates closed.
90481015	PIN	P148934-15	S355A	03/26/2024	Gates closed.

a. PIE – Everglades National Park Inflows East; and PIN – Everglades National Park Inflows North.

b. These abbreviated notes do not necessarily convey all the details from the sample comments that can be seen in DBHYDRO.

FIELD QUALITY CONTROL

Field quality control samples were collected at sampling locations during each sampling event to assess the quality of the sample collection process as required by the *Field Sampling Manual*. The results from these quality control samples were associated with all samples collected during the sampling trip (day). If a specific field quality control sample failed to meet the requirements outlined in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) *Quality Assurance Rule* (Chapter 62-160, Florida Administrative Code [F.A.C.]), qualifiers were added to the appropriate sample results. The types of field quality control samples could include replicate samples (RSs) and field quality control blanks, along with field generated equipment blanks (EBs), field-cleaned equipment blanks (FCEBs), and field blanks (FBs). The sampling events listed in **Table 2** may include field quality control samples collected at locations other than those listed in **Table 1**.

For the 45 sampling events described above, 30 field quality control blanks (one EB, eight FBs, 21 FCEBs) and four RSs were collected. One of the 21 FCEBs, which is a Field Operation Center quality control (FOCQC) sample (Sample ID: P129288-15), had a concentration equal to or greater than the TP method detection limit (MDL) of 0.002 milligrams per liter (mg/L). Project managers responsible for directing the sampling activities may also place qualifiers and/or remark codes on sample results based on project specific requirements, historical results for a given location, issues related to site conditions, and/or problems encountered by technicians when the samples were collected. Remark codes include a project manager remark (PMR), an SFWMD-derived and -applied remark code indicating a potential quality issue not otherwise defined by the qualifiers specified in the FDEP *Quality Assurance Rule* (Chapter 62-160, F.A.C.).

For grab samples collected at locations described in **Table 1**, no PMR was assigned by project managers. “G” qualifiers, however, were assigned to seven samples (**Table 4**) and two RSs due to analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit (0.002 mg/L) in both the sample and the associated FOCQC FCEB, and the blank value (0.002 mg/L) was greater than 10% of the associated sample value as per the FDEP *Quality Assurance Rule* (Chapter 62-160, F.A.C.).

Table 4. Results with qualifiers and remark codes during the reporting period for the 45 sample events listed in Table 2.

Work Identifier	Project ^a	Sample Identifier	Station	Collection Date	Qualifier or Remark Code / Reason
90661012	EVPA	P149288-12	LOX4	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661010	EVPA	P149288-10	LOX7	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661009	EVPA	P149288-9	LOX8	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661008	EVPA	P149288-8	LOX9	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661007	EVPA	P149288-7	LOX10	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661006	EVPA	P149288-6	LOX5	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.
90661005	EVPA	P149288-5	LOX3	02/26/2024	G: Analyte was detected at or above the method detection limit in both the sample and the associated field blank, equipment blank, or trip blank, and the blank value was greater than 10% of the associated sample value.

a. EVPA – Everglades Protection Area.

FIELD AUDITS

SFWMD did not conduct any field audits on TOC-related projects in the first quarter of 2024.

FIELD PROCEDURE UPDATES

No major procedural updates related to TP sample collection were made during the period specified in this report.

LABORATORY ANALYSIS QUALITY ASSESSMENT

SAMPLE ANALYSES

SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory staff conducted 349 TP analyses for the grab samples collected during the 45 sampling events listed in **Table 2** and detailed in RDS. Of those 349 TP results, 182 were for grab samples collected from projects/locations listed in **Table 1** (excluding field quality control samples). For reference, a complete set of all 349 grab TP results can be found in the RDS described in **Table 1** with the sample identifiers, sampling locations, collection dates, etc.

LABORATORY QUALITY CONTROL

TP analyses are routinely conducted in the SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory in analytical batches of approximately 100 samples. To assess the quality of the sample results produced during the analyses of these batches, various types of laboratory control samples are included according to the requirements described in the *Chemistry Laboratory Quality Manual* (SFWMD-LAB-QM-001). The results of these laboratory quality control samples are associated with the analyses conducted in each batch, and qualifiers are added to the data as required by the FDEP *Quality Assurance Rule* (Chapter 62-160, F.A.C.), which is based on the specifications found in the *Chemistry Laboratory Quality Manual* (SFWMD-LAB-QM-001). The types of laboratory quality control samples typically run in a batch include samples with certified concentrations (laboratory control samples), matrix spikes, precision checks (duplicates or matrix spike duplicates), and method blanks. Since the laboratory exhibited no quality control failures, none of the laboratory operation related qualifiers were added for the 182 TP results of samples collected from projects/locations listed in **Table 1**.

METHOD DETECTION LIMIT AND PRACTICAL QUANTITATION LIMIT

The MDL is defined as the minimum concentration of a substance that can be measured and reported with 99% confidence that the analyte concentration is greater than zero and is determined by the laboratory on an annual basis using the procedure described in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 40 CFR 136, Appendix B. The practical quantitation limit (PQL) is the minimum concentration of an analyte that can be measured with a high degree of confidence that the analyte is present at or above that concentration. However, there is not any universally accepted (or required) method for determining the PQL. In the case of TP analyses, the SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory PQL (0.004 mg/L) is set to the concentration of the lowest standard used for calibration, which is a typical approach among analytical laboratories. Any TP results that are below the MDL (0.002 mg/L) are assigned a “U” qualifier indicating that there is high confidence that the analyte is not present. The reported TP values between the MDL (0.002 mg/L) and the PQL (0.004 mg/L) are assigned an “I” qualifier, indicating that the results are at concentrations that cannot be accurately quantified. Of the 182 TP results reported, no results were below the MDL and 13 samples had concentrations between the MDL (0.002 mg/L) and the PQL (0.004 mg/L).

ESTIMATION OF ANALYTICAL MEASUREMENT UNCERTAINTY

All measurements are subject to uncertainty and a measured value is only complete if a statement of the associated uncertainty accompanies it. The definition of uncertainty (of measurement) can be found in the *International Vocabulary of Basic and General Standard Terms in Metrology*: “A parameter associated

with the result of a measurement that characterizes the dispersion of the values that could reasonably be attributed to the measurand” (JCGM 1993). The uncertainty has a probabilistic basis and reflects incomplete knowledge of the quantity. The SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory provides uncertainty estimates using the nested hierarchical methodology by Ingersoll (2001) in combination with a mathematical model found in Eurachem/CITAC (2012). This quality control-based nested approach uses the statistical quality control data attributed to laboratory measurement activities and does not include uncertainty attributed to field sampling activities. The estimated uncertainty is calculated using the following equation:

$$U(x) = \sqrt{s_o^2 + (s_1^2 x^2)}$$

$U(x)$ is the combined standard uncertainty in the result x at the 95% confidence interval (CI).

S_0 is a constant contribution to the overall uncertainty derived from the procedure to determine the MDL.

S_1 is a proportionality constant derived from nested hierarchical methodology by Ingersoll (2001).

During this reporting period, the uncertainty constants are $S_0 = 0.002$ and $S_1 = 0.068$. Estimated uncertainties are calculated automatically by LIMS using the equation and constants shown above and are provided with all TP results. **Figure 1** presents estimated uncertainties at the 95% and 99% CIs relative to the MDL and PQL of the TP measurement process.

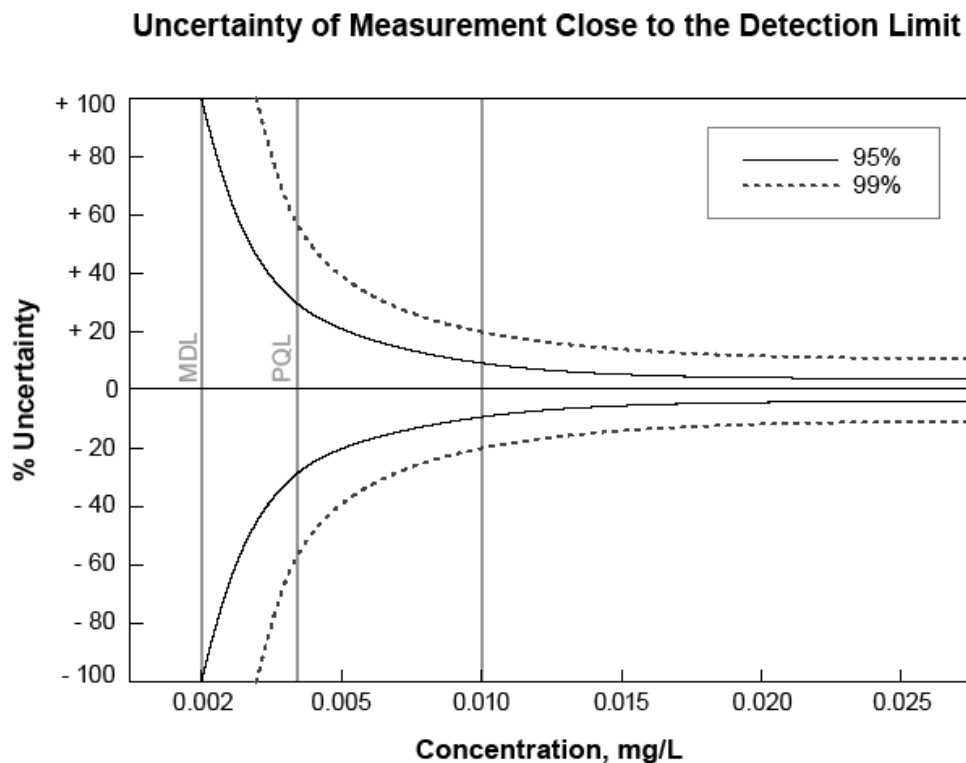


Figure 1. Estimated uncertainties at the 95% and 99% CIs relative to the MDL and PQL of the TP measurement process.

As seen in **Figure 1**, the percent measurement uncertainty (95% CI) is 100% at the MDL, nearly 30% at the PQL, and remains relatively constant at higher concentrations.

PROFICIENCY TESTING AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The SFWMD Analytical Services Chemistry Laboratory participates in a variety of studies to evaluate the proficiency of the laboratory's quality system. During the first quarter of 2024, the laboratory participated in the Environmental Canada surface water performance evaluation study and is awaiting results.

LABORATORY AUDITS

During this reporting period, the laboratory performed its annual internal audit. There were seven corrective actions, two observations, and two recommendations identified. These findings have been entered into the laboratory's corrective action log and are in the process of being addressed. Only one deficiency was relevant to the laboratory's TP analytical procedure. LIMS reagent bottle labels did not have storage requirements on them or reference to the standard operating manual. This deficiency, however, did not affect the quality of the TP sample data.

PROCEDURE UPDATES

The TP sample preparation procedure (Standard Method 4500-P B 5, Persulfate Digestion Method) did not change during this reporting period. The analytical procedure (Standard Methods 4500-P F, Automated Ascorbic Acid Reduction Method) was updated per FDEP request to include the revision date. The new reference is Standard Method 4500-P F-2011, Automated Ascorbic Acid Reduction Method.

REFERENCES

- Eurachem/CITAC. 2012. *Quantifying Uncertainty in Analytical Measurement, Third Edition*. Guide CG4, Eurachem/CITAC, Austria. ISBN 0-948926-15-5.
- FDEP. 2018. *Quality Assurance*. Chapter 62-160, Florida Administrative Code. Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, FL. Effective April 16, 2018.
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- SFWMD. *Field Quality Manual*. SFWMD-FIELD-QM-001, most current, effective version. South Florida Water Management District, West Palm Beach, FL.
- SFWMD. *Field Sampling Manual*. SFWMD-FIELD-FSM-001, most current, effective version. South Florida Water Management District, West Palm Beach, FL.
- SFWMD. *Standard Operating Procedure for the Determination of Total and Dissolved Phosphorus*. SFWMD-LAB-SOP-3140, most current, effective version. South Florida Water Management District, West Palm Beach, FL.

GLOSSARY

Accuracy: The degree of agreement between an observed value and an accepted reference value. Accuracy includes a combination of random error (precision) and systematic error (bias) components that are due to sampling and analytical operations.

Confidence Interval (CI): A range of values so defined that there is a specified probability that the value of a parameter lies within it.

Equipment Blank (EB): Field quality control sample prepared using sampling equipment that has been brought to the site or processing area precleaned and is collected before the equipment has been used. The results of these blanks are used to monitor the on-site sampling environment, sampling equipment decontamination, sample container cleaning, suitability of sample preservatives and analyte-free water, sample transport and storage conditions, and laboratory process.

Field Blank (FB): FBs are collected by pouring analyte-free water directly into the sample container, preserved, and kept open for the same approximate time and interval as required for collection and/or processing of the routine sample. The results of this blank are used to monitor the on-site sampling environment, sample container cleaning, the suitability of sample preservatives and analyte-free water, sample transport and storage conditions, and laboratory process.

Field Cleaned Equipment Blank (FCEB): Field quality control sample prepared using sampling equipment that has been cleaned in the field or at the processing area. The results of this blank are used to monitor the on-site sampling environment, sampling equipment field decontamination, sample container cleaning, suitability of sample preservatives and analyte-free water, sample transport and storage conditions, and laboratory process.

Measurand: Particular quantity subject to measurement.

Method Detection Limit (MDL): The smallest concentration of an analyte of interest that can be measured and reported with 99% confidence that the concentration is greater than zero. The MDLs are determined from the analysis of a sample in a given matrix, using accepted sampling and analytical preparation procedures, containing the analyte at a specified level. The MDL is determined by the protocol defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 40 CFR, Part 136, Appendix B, as established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Practical Quantitation Limit (PQL): The smallest concentration of an analyte of interest that can be quantitatively reported with a specific degree of confidence. The PQL is verified for each matrix, technology, and analyte. The validity of the PQL is verified by analysis of a quality control sample containing the analyte of concern.

Precision: The agreement or closeness between two or more results and is an indication that the measurement system is operating consistently and is a quantifiable indication of variations introduced by the analytical systems over a given time and field sampling period.

Replicate Sample (RS): An RS is collected by repeating (simultaneously or in rapid succession) the entire sample acquisition technique that was used to obtain the routine sample. A single RS set (e.g., one sample and two RSs) is collected per quarter, per project, at the same station, for the longest parameter list. RS data are compared to routine sample data to evaluate sampling precision.

Uncertainty: The range of values within which the true value is estimated to lie. It is a best estimate of possible inaccuracy due to both random and systematic error.

Z-Score: A measure of the deviation of the result (X_i) from the assigned value (X) for that determinant (calculated as $z = (X_i - X)/\sigma$, where σ is a standard deviation) (Eurachem/CITAC 2012).