

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
AMONG
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
and
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
and
STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
and
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
and
STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will clarify the intended objectives and roles of the partner states that received funding for the Electronic Storage and Sharing of Laboratory Information project. The state entities committed to this initiative include: the State of New Hampshire, Department of Environmental Services; the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection; the State of Maine, Department of Human Services; the State of Rhode Island, Department of Health; and the State of Vermont, Department of Environmental Conservation. This Agreement will serve as a formal document defining the responsibilities and coordination among the partner agencies. As such, this MOU is intended to specify the following project objectives:

1. Develop and implement a process to electronically flow data directly from certified laboratories to the State Drinking Water Programs, mindful of the CROMERRR- rule, with the ultimate goal to expand the process to other regulatory programs.
2. Provide EPA, programs and the general public access to laboratory data via the Network Node in XML format.
3. Actively work with both the partnered state environmental laboratories and a core group of commercial laboratories in the development of the data exchange template.
4. Ensure that future environmental decisions are made from accurate and consistent laboratory data.
5. Reduce the reporting burden on the regulated community.

Background

EPA has completed the first step to a complete electronic data file transfer by its development of the Central Data Exchange (CDX) template using Extensible Markup Language (XML) standards. States involved in the Alpha/ Beta Network Node projects now have a CDX node that can receive data in XML format and, in turn, can send data to EPA, or EPA can retrieve data from the State. Laboratories participating in the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule use the CDX node to report sample results directly to EPA's Safe Drinking Water Accession & Review System (SDWARS), although many are manually entering this information. State Drinking Water Programs reporting directly to EPA's Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS) fed or via the region, could eventually report directly via the node. Laboratories have Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS) that can supply the required data elements needed by the Drinking Water Programs and EPA; however, to date, most labs cannot provide, nor can the state electronically receive, this information. It is the goal of this project to further the process of electronic sharing of laboratory data.

The participating states come to this project each with a different familiarity with the Network, with different needs for storing data, and in their ability to capture data from laboratories. This project allows for flexibility in each of these areas and permits the states to adopt the e-commerce principles in accordance with their needs and capabilities. The state networks will benefit both for the accurate and consistent data received and the timely reporting of critical information to the Drinking Water Programs. It is anticipated that several products will result from this project including:

1. Set of business rules for accepting electronic data from the labs to the state drinking water programs;
2. A complete process to allow electronic data flow from the laboratory to state drinking water program;
3. A data validation procedure template;
4. Set of data standards for electronic transfer;
5. Template for an Internet form, that is CROMERRR compliant, which is the validation point for the data file to be submitted;
6. Template for Trading Partnership Agreements.

Each of these products will be available to and benefit other States/Tribes as they participate in the Network.

Principles of Agreement

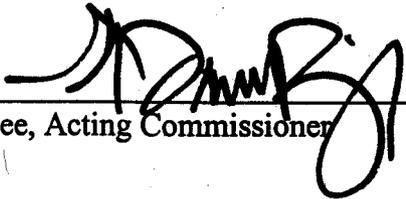
1. The New England (NE) states will establish a team of IT, laboratory, and drinking water program staff to participate in the Electronic Storage and Sharing of Laboratory Information project. Members, or a designee of the state team, will:
 - a. Participate in bi-weekly conference calls and additional calls as deemed necessary by the group.
 - b. Attend quarterly meetings with the partner states at designated regional sites to discuss progress and next steps.
 - c. Participate as required in state needs assessments.
 - d. Consider, evaluate and implement, as determined by the work group, recommendations of the Advisory Committee.
 - e. NJ will participate in these activities to the greatest extent possible.
2. New Hampshire will secure a facilitator for the purpose of:
 - a. Coordinating the efforts of the partner states to achieve project goals.
 - b. Keeping partner states abreast of other similar state and EPA efforts involving the scope of the Electronic Storage and Sharing of Laboratory Information project.
 - c. Assisting in coordinating state needs assessments.
 - d. Defining state business rules for accepting electronic data from the labs to the state drinking water programs.
3. The NE states will commit and/or hire technical staff as needed to:
 - a. Perform assessments of the state lab, the drinking water program, other potential environmental program users, and other private commercial laboratories submitting environmental data to the State to determine data needs and capacities to generate, exchange and process environmental water quality data.
 - b. Evaluate and document available technologies as they apply to existing and proposed state infrastructure.
 - c. Define and document standard operating procedures and training materials.

4. Each state will prepare and submit project documentation in a timely manner.
5. Each state will work with other state partners to define appropriate data elements and participate in the process of developing an XML schema for the exchange process, and validation and notification protocols between laboratories and state regulatory agencies. The states will leverage the work products of other states and the EPA whenever doing so is beneficial to this project. New Jersey intends to specifically leverage the work of the Michigan-lead drinking water XML schema project.
6. Each state will identify/establish a data repository.
 - a. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services will develop a data warehouse for lab results. Public water system information that currently resides in the state public water system database will be linked to the warehouse results.
 - b. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection laboratory results will reside in SDWIS-State.
 - c. The Maine Department of Human Services proposes that laboratory results will reside in the state drinking water program (SDWIS-State.)
 - d. The Rhode Island Department of Health will develop an integrated data repository in cooperation with the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) who have been awarded the Readiness portion of the grant and will build the node. This will involve the purchase of hardware and the implementation of software as appropriate to the overall plan and best data management practices.
 - e. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation plans to have a dedicated LIMS platform to be used in conjunction with the department database. The platform will serve as a laboratory data source for the network node that is in development via a Readiness grant.
7. Each state will participate in the development of a web-based front-end template for submission of electronic results.
8. Each state will collaborate on the development of a Trade Partnership Agreement (TPA) template between the state regulatory agencies and the laboratory data providers.
9. States with completed projects at the end of this process will work with state labs, private labs and environmental program entities to pilot test the proposed data exchange.

With the federal funds received from the Environmental Protection Agency's Information and Exchange Network Challenge Grant, the partner states agree to support the nine Principals of Agreement outlined in this Memo of Understanding.

Laurie Cullerot of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services will serve as the point of communication for the New England Region 1 partner states. Irene Kropp of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection will represent the New Jersey initiative. Ellie Kwong of the EPA New England will represent the US Environmental Protection Agency.

For: NH Dept of Environmental Services (NHDES),



Dana Bisbee, Acting Commissioner

12/21/02 (date)

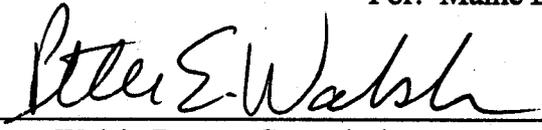
For: NJ Dept of Environmental Protection (NJDEP),



Irene Kropp, Chief Information Officer

1/23/03 (date)

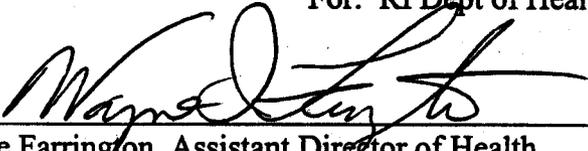
For: Maine Dept of Human Services (MDHS),



Peter Walsh, Deputy Commissioner

1/14/03 (date)

For: RI Dept of Health (RI DH),

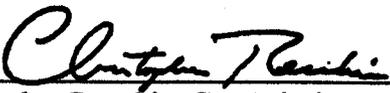


Wayne Farrington, Assistant Director of Health

1/6/03 (date)

DAR

For: Vermont Dept of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC),



Christopher Recchia, Commissioner

12/6/02 (date)