

**Hawaii Department of Health Clean Water Branch  
Monitoring and Analysis Section**

**Data Acceptance Criteria**

Data submitted to HIDOH Clean Water Branch (CWB) for the purpose of assessing state water quality may be used to fulfill various federal Clean Water Act requirements. Decisions and conclusions resulting from the data submitted to CWB can have broad and long-standing implications to the state water quality program. It is therefore imperative that only data of known and acceptable quality be used to assess waters for conformance with state water quality standards. Data of known and acceptable quality, also known as credible data, can be assured through a series of defined and systematic activities applied throughout the planning and data generating process. The elements listed below constitute the minimum requirements for data acceptance by the CWB for water quality assessment purposes. These elements help to assure that the data ultimately used by the CWB are known, credible, scientifically valid, and defensible – collectively referred to as “valid data.” Data not meeting these requirements may not be used for state water quality assessments; however, they may be used for other non-regulatory purposes.

1. All data submittals, to the extent feasible, should be in electronic format that is PC compatible, preferably in Office 2010 (or later) or PDF format. References to web sites will not be accepted in lieu of actual data submitted.
2. All data must be submitted in the units of measurement specified in HAR 11-54<sup>1</sup>.
3. To expedite processing, all data and information submitted for consideration in the State’s biennial Integrated Report should include a completed Integrated Report Data Submittal Information form<sup>2</sup> containing the following information:
  - a. Name and contact information of person or organization submitting data.
  - b. Documentation assuring the completeness and accuracy of the data and information.
  - c. Date of submission
  - d. Geographical Information System (GIS) data files (ArcGis mxd or ArcView shapefiles), if applicable.
  - e. Start and end date(s) of data collection or time period that the submitted information represents.
  - f. HAR 11-54 waterbody classifications (Water Quality Criteria) for which data are being reported. Include salinity data to support classification determination.
  - g. Parameters (pollutants) assessed for the submitted data.
  - h. Brief summary of submittal or list of submittal contents and any instructions required for assessment, which may include:
    - i. Definitions for codes and/or abbreviations used.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://health.hawaii.gov/cwb/files/2013/04/Clean\\_Water\\_Branch\\_HAR\\_11-54\\_20141115.pdf](https://health.hawaii.gov/cwb/files/2013/04/Clean_Water_Branch_HAR_11-54_20141115.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://health.hawaii.gov/cwb/files/2023/05/Data-submittal-form-2024.pdf>

- ii. Whether additional summaries or instructions are attached to the cover sheet and, if present, where they are included in the submittal.
4. A minimum of 30 samples per decision unit or watershed over a two-year period is required to assess water quality in the State's Integrated Report. Assessments will be made for pollutants listed in HAR 11-54. The CWB will accept all valid data from individual submitters (including those submissions with less than 30 samples). All valid data may be assessed collectively for a decision unit or watershed. To be considered of sufficient quantity and quality to be used as a primary line of evidence in assessing water quality standards attainment, data being submitted should contain the following:
  - a. A minimum of 30 samples per decision unit or waterbody. If less than 30 samples are received from all submitters, the decision unit or waterbody may not be assessed. However, the data may be used by the CWB for other purposes.
  - b. A collection period within the two-year date range stated in the CWB call for data (unless the submitted data is part of a continuous study showing historical trend). Note that data collected prior to the start of the CWB date range may not necessarily be used in the Integrated Report but may be used for other purposes.
  - c. The location of the water body and sample site(s), including:
    - i. GIS metadata with detail of all parameters of the projection including geodetic datum.
    - ii. Location(s) of the exact area(s) of the water body/sample sites in which data were collected for, including:
      1. Very clear electronic copy indicating the area(s) the information pertains to (*e.g.*, mark sample location(s) on a USGS topographic map) and
      2. The latitude/longitude and geodetic datum of the sample location(s)
  - d. Metadata for field and laboratory data, including:
    - i. Name of sampler, date, and time of all sample collection and field measurements.
    - ii. Unique location identifier(s) for all sample location(s) (*i.e.*, unique site code(s), etc.) within the water body.
    - iii. Pollutant(s) or condition(s) measured.
    - iv. Number of samples collected and/or field measurements made.
    - v. Name of laboratory that performed sample analyses, if applicable.
    - vi. Analyses performed, including date(s) and time(s) of respective analyses and name of analyst.
    - vii. Units of measurement.
    - viii. Analytical methods (name and method number, if applicable) and instrument detection limits.
    - ix. Other relevant factors such as field notes; internal laboratory Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) protocol, documentation, and results; laboratory comments or notations concerning deviations from standard QA/QC procedures, including QA/QC factors that may affect data reliability, validity, or interpretation.

- e. Supporting or associated analytical data (e.g., hardness data with dissolved metals samples or temperature and pH data with ammonia measurements)
5. Quality Assurance of data collection should be documented.
    - a. All sample collection and field measurements should be made under the guidance of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) or equivalent quality assurance document. For more information, see EPA's Quality Assurance Project Plan Development Toolkit for handbook and examples  
<https://www.epa.gov/participatory-science/quality-assurance-handbook-and-toolkit-participatory-science-projects>
      - i. The QAPP or equivalent quality assurance document should be developed by the submitting entity and signed by both the highest authority and the person responsible for quality assurance within the submitting entity.
    - b. An electronic copy of the QAPP or equivalent quality assurance document should be submitted to CWB Monitoring and Analysis Section prior to data acceptance.
      - i. Data may be excluded from water quality assessments if a QAPP or equivalent document is not submitted.
      - ii. Data not accepted for water quality assessment may be used for other purposes.
  6. Laboratory analyses
    - a. The person or organization submitting data to the CWB is responsible for all data that they submit, including data generated by their laboratories, and is responsible for submitting all pertinent laboratory information specified in this document.
    - b. Documentation of the analyst's (or analysts') credentials, including training and proficiency documentation for the parameters being reported may be requested.
  7. Narrative and qualitative submittals
    - a. Narrative and qualitative submittals should:
      - i. Identify the sample site(s) and exact area(s) of the water body, as described in Section 4.d. above.
      - ii. Provide detailed description and documentation of the sample site(s).
      - iii. Include photographic documentation as supporting evidence, where applicable.
      - iv. Provide detailed description and documentation of the sampling/measurement methods used. EPA or industry-standard methods should be used.
      - v. Identify the date(s) that the data were collected and date(s) that the assessments were made.
      - vi. Describe events or conditions (and/or provide documentation) that indicate impacts on water quality.
      - vii. Demonstrate and document that the narrative and qualitative information being submitted adequately represents the water body during the time period in which the data was collected.

- viii. Provide a linkage between the measurement endpoint and the water quality standard of interest.
- b. Assessments without supporting documentation may not be used for decision making purposes.

Raw data, instrument QC data (including, but not limited to, calibration data, control charts, spiked sample results, and maintenance records), complete field notes (including climate and water flow information, field conditions, documented sources of pollution, etc.) should be made available to CWB upon request to facilitate data credibility and assessment review. Raw data are defined as any original factual information from a measurement activity or study recorded in a laboratory notebook, worksheets, records, memoranda, notes, or exact copies thereof that are necessary for the reconstruction and evaluation of the report of the activity or study. Raw data may include photography, microfilm or microfiche copies, computer/instrument printouts, magnetic or digital media - including dictated observations and recorded data from automated instruments. If exact copies of raw data have been prepared (and verified accurate by signature) then the exact copy or exact transcript may be substituted.

Data submissions not meeting these requirements may be excluded from water quality assessment purposes.

All data submitted will become public domain and may be used for any appropriate purpose identified by the CWB.