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## **U.S. Geological Survey**

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### **Privacy Policies**

The information on these pages is provided to assist you in finding information that will help you understand the [Privacy Act](#) (Public Law 5 U.S.C. ?552a, as amended), as it relates to privacy policies of the U.S. Geological Survey, a bureau of the Department of the Interior. See [DOI Privacy Policy](#).

### **How We Handle the Information We Gather When You Visit Our Web Site**

The type of information that we receive from your visit to our Web sites depends upon what you do when visiting our sites. We use this information to measure the number of visitors to the different sections of our sites and to help us make our sites more useful to visitors.

**Child Privacy** - The USGS values the privacy and protection of children in the use of its Web sites. We adhere to the privacy policies stated below in dealing with children 13 years and younger and for all visitors to USGS Web sites. (for more information see ?a href="http://www.ftc.gov/ogc/coppa1.htm">Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998.?/p>

It is the policy of the USGS that we will not obtain personal identifying information about you when you visit our Web sites, unless you choose to provide the information to us (for example, through a questionnaire in which you willingly provide such information, or in which you are requesting a publication or other information to be transmitted to you by the USGS).

**Identification for Law Enforcement or Unauthorized Use** - The only time that we

will attempt to identify individual users or to share any information we receive with any parties outside of the USGS is (1) in the course of officially authorized law enforcement investigations or (2) in the event of a suspected attempt to deliberately circumvent our system抐 security with the intent to gain unauthorized access or to do physical damage (for example, an attack by hackers). In the latter case, information collected about a suspected intruder may be shared with the USGS Information Technology Security Manager (see Contact information below).

**Web Server Activity** - Like most Web servers on the Internet, USGS servers collect and store within Web access logs all of the information that your Web browser sends when it requests a Web page, including:

- the name, domain, and numerical internet address of the host computer (typically a computer belonging to your Internet Service Provider and not your personal computer) from which you access the Internet;
- the date and time you accessed our site;
- the Internet address of the Web page that you came from;
- the page you requested from our site and the number of characters sent to your computer; and
- the information your Web browser software sends as its so-called "User Agent," which typically identifies the browser software and may also indicate the operating system used in your personal computer and the type of computer.

It is impossible to determine the actual identity of an individual user from this information. The logs are periodically summarized and analyzed to study site usage over time and to perform other studies to help us improve the site's organization, performance, and usefulness. Monthly extracts of the log files are archived and stored offline at our discretion for an indefinite period of time. Some statistical summaries derived from these data may be retained online or offline at our discretion for an indefinite period of time.

**Cookies** - Some applications may save a "cookie" on your computer's hard disk to provide a temporary history of actions taken. A common example is the tracking of items placed in an online "shopping basket." We do not retain any record of "cookies" beyond what is necessary for running the application.

**E-Mail or Web Forms** - When you send us personal identifying information by contacting us via e-mail (that is, in a message containing a question or comment) or by filling out a form that e-mails us this information, we use it to respond to your requests. We may forward your e-mail or information to other Government employees or contract personnel who are better able to answer your questions.

We do not retain or distribute lists of e-mail addresses to any parties outside the USGS, except as necessary to conduct official U.S. Government business, and we do not distribute lists of e-mail addresses to non-Government entities. Information collected via

e-mail or Web form will be retained at our discretion in a readable form for as long as necessary to complete our response. The e-mail or information may be retained in an archival form as required by Federal laws and regulations governing the retention of historical records of Government agencies. For more information, please refer to the [National Archives and Records Administration's Records Management Program](#).

**File Transfer Protocol (FTP)** - Many USGS sites using the file transfer protocol may also store your e-mail address if your Web browser is configured to provide it. By default, most Web browser software does not send your e-mail address; this option is configured through your browser preferences.

**Online Surveys** - When you voluntarily provide us with personal information as part of an online survey, we use it to perform various quantitative and qualitative analyses to improve customer service and satisfaction. We may forward the information collected to other Government employees or contract personnel to perform the actual analysis. You are under no obligation to participate in such surveys. Non-participation will not inhibit your use of our Web site in any way. If you provided the information to us in error, you may request its removal at any time. Information collected via online surveys may be retained at our discretion for an indefinite period of time.

**Ordering Products Online** - When you voluntarily provide us with personal information such as name, shipping and billing address, and credit card number when ordering products online, we use the information to fulfill your order. We may forward the information collected to other Government employees or contract personnel or to other computer systems (such as secure electronic commerce servers) to complete the requested transaction.

## Site Security

To provide site security and to ensure that this service remains available to all users, our Government computer system employs software programs to monitor network traffic to identify unauthorized attempts to upload or change information or otherwise cause damage. Unauthorized attempts to upload information or change information on this Web site are strictly prohibited and may be punishable under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986 and the National Information Infrastructure Protection Act. Information may also be used for authorized law enforcement investigations. For more information, see the section entitled, [Identification for Law Enforcement or Unauthorized Use](#).

## Policy

For relevant USGS policy on privacy, refer to the Survey Manual chapter entitled, [Privacy Act - General](http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/313/319-1.html).

For relevant USGS policy on information technology security, refer to the Survey Manual chapters entitled, [?a href="http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/600/600-2.html">Control of the Registration and Deletion of Computer User Identifications \(User ID's\)?](http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/600/600-2.html)and [?a href="http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/600/600-5.html">Automated Information Systems Security - General Requirements.?](http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/600/600-5.html)/p>

## Contact

If you have questions on USGS privacy or information technology security, contact:

[USGS Privacy Officer](#)

Mail Stop 807  
National Center  
USGS  
Reston, VA 20192

[USGS Information Technology Security Manager](#)

Mail Stop 802  
National Center  
USGS  
Reston, VA 20192

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URL: <http://www.usgs.gov/privacy.html>

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