



U.S. Geological Survey Manual

500.9 - Approval by the Director for Outside Publication and Oral Presentation

9/20/93

OPR: Assistant Director for Research

1. Purpose. This Chapter establishes U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) policy and procedures for obtaining approval by the Director for publication of maps, scientific and technical reports, and general-interest publications; for oral presentations to the public; for motion pictures, slide shows, audio and video tape recordings, and public service announcements; and for internal newsletters.

2. References.

Survey Manual Chapters:

(1) 500.5 Policy on Release of Written Information to the News Media.

(2) 500.7 Audiovisual Media and Products.

(3) 500.8 Review of USGS Publications and

Abstracts of Oral Presentations for Policy-Sensitive Issues.

(4) 500.10 Exchange of Unclassified Scientific and Technical Information.

(5) 500.14 Safeguard and Release of U.S. Geological Survey Data and Information.

(6) 500.24 Policy for Release of Computer

Databases and Computer Programs.

(7) 503.1 Criteria Defining Use of U.S. Geological Survey Publications Series and of Outside Publications.

(8) 503.2 Credits and Acknowledgements in

Reports by USGS Authors.

3. Background. For more than 100 years the USGS has earned widespread respect for the quality and scientific integrity of its publications. The results of USGS investigations are made available in an impartial manner that will best serve all the public, rather than the interests of any special group or individual. Approval by the Director is the final step in the processing of a report before it is released for production and publication either in a USGS series or in an outside format. The objectives of Director's review are to provide the final check on the technical integrity of the report, to ensure that all the appropriate processing steps have been followed, that USGS publications standards have been maintained, and that the report is consistent with USGS and Department policies and positions.

4. Policy.

A. *All writings* (including abstracts) in which the USGS has a proprietary interest and all writings in which the author's title and USGS affiliation will be shown (including letters to the editor) must be submitted for Director's approval prior to release for publication. Letters to the editor are subject to review by the Bureau Public Affairs Office and may require Departmental clearance.

B. *The USGS is considered* to have a proprietary interest in all manuscripts derived from research or investigations conducted under USGS auspices, and from data obtained under those auspices.

C. *Reports may include* acknowledgement of official authorization, using the wording "PUBLICATION AUTHORIZED BY THE DIRECTOR, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY."

D. *USGS information-dissemination products* in other media, including motion pictures, slide shows, audio and video tape recordings, and public service announcements, and internal newsletters require Director's approval.

5. Criteria for Director's Approval of Publications and Oral Presentations. The underlying principle is that the results of investigations carrying a USGS affiliation should be made available in an impartial and objective manner that will best serve all the American public, rather than the special interests of any group or individual. Consequently, in obtaining Director's approval as the final step in processing the product before it is released, the objective is to provide a final check on its technical integrity and to ensure that all the appropriate processing steps have been followed, that USGS publications standards have been maintained, and that the product is consistent with USGS and Departmental policies and positions.

Among the criteria used to evaluate products for Director's approval are:

A. *Integrity.* The data collected are accurate and precise and the methods of collection are documented. The interpretations are presented as honestly and straightforwardly as possible, without apparent bias. The tone of the report is reasonable; derogatory remarks of a personal nature are avoided. References are

used as backup whenever possible. Plans for future reports are not discussed, except in planning documents. Speculation about results that might be observed is not appropriate in USGS reports.

B. *Objectivity*. The conclusions are based on accurate data interpreted with sound scientific reasoning. Department and USGS policies and positions are not compromised or deliberately contradicted.

C. *Impartiality and Nonadvocacy*. The report presents facts and interpretations impartially for others to use for their own purposes. Alternatives are evaluated rather than solutions recommended. Advocacy positions are avoided; so are preaching and lecturing. There is no implied adverse criticism of other agencies, State or Federal, or of the private sector.

D. *Public Benefit*. Information in the report has broad applicability to the user community rather than favoring a restricted sector. The study does not imply competition with the private sector, nor do the results favor a special private entity.

E. *Geologic Hazards*. Reports that identify forecasts or predictions of geologic hazards are scientifically sound and have been technically reviewed by qualified scientific peers. Appropriate officials from the Bureau, State, and other Federal agencies, and hence the general public, are being alerted in a timely manner about the hazard.

6. *Oral Presentations*. The rules for approval by the Director apply in a more limited way to oral presentations. Speakers must recognize their responsibilities in representing the USGS; they must use discretion in discussing controversial topics, must not discuss unsettled or unannounced Department or USGS plans and policies, or prematurely disclose the results of significant investigations. If there can be any doubt as to the propriety of the content or tone of a proposed speech, a written copy of the statement should, before delivery, be submitted through normal Division publication channels for review and clearance. Divisions may set up internal requirements for clearance of oral presentations for which Director's approval is not considered necessary.

Interviews initiated by the news media or congressional offices should be reported immediately after first contact to the immediate supervisor and the Bureau Public Affairs Office or Congressional Liaison Office.

7. *Administrative Reports*. Administrative reports are those prepared by the USGS for exclusive use by and within another Federal agency. Administrative reports must receive Director's approval for release only to the Federal agency for which the work was done. Once transmitted, these reports are the property of the other Federal agency. Administrative reports are prepared and reviewed using the same criteria for technical accuracy and policy as for any other USGS interpretative report. Only the USGS or the Federal agency for which the report was written may review the report. For flood-insurance studies prepared for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, approval authority for administrative release has been delegated to the Regional Hydrologist by the Director and the Chief Hydrologist.

During the initial discussions of studies to be done for other Federal agencies, the designation of report products as administrative reports should be avoided if at all possible. Every effort should be made to secure permission to publish the reports or release them through the open-file system. If confidentiality is a major concern of the other Federal agency, then an administrative report is an appropriate vehicle for conveying the results of USGS studies.

8. Other Manuscripts. Manuscripts in which the USGS has no proprietary interests, which do not involve time or knowledge gained during official time, and in which the author's official connection with the USGS is not to be shown, do not require approval by the USGS prior to publication. For example, employees of the USGS may publish the results of investigations carried on by them under other auspices prior to joining the USGS, providing that they have prepared the manuscript on their own time and wholly without cost to the USGS. However, the authors should send to their Division Chief a memorandum briefly outlining the intention to publish and the circumstances. This memorandum will make publication plans a matter of record and permit review.

9. Motion Pictures, Slide Shows, Audio and Video Tape Recordings, and Public Service Announcements. Departmental Manual Chapter 471.1 prescribes specific policies and procedures for motion pictures, slide shows, audio and video tape recordings, and public service announcements produced by or attributed to any bureau. It is USGS policy to treat products in these media or formats as written reports and, irrespective of the intended outside audience (general public or technical peers), to subject them to the same standards and approvals that govern USGS publications and technical reports in printed form. Refer to Survey Manual Chapter 500.7 for procedural guidance on the approval and management of USGS motion pictures, slide shows, audio and video tape recordings, and public service announcements.

10. Internal Newsletters. Internal newsletters are reports, in printed or other media, giving news or information of interest to USGS employees on USGS program or employee matters. Internal newsletters must meet established Bureau standards of propriety, accuracy, integrity, objectivity, and impartiality commensurate with those established for newsletters directed at public audiences and other external publications. The USGS shall produce and disseminate internal newsletters only where they are in the best interest of the Bureau and necessary for the proper performance of Bureau functions. Division Chiefs are responsible for actively and regularly reviewing the necessity, number, frequency, and distribution of internal newsletters to ensure that costs are limited to the minimum amount necessary and that expenditures of USGS funds (from any source) for internal newsletters are prudently managed. Before initiating an internal newsletter, the requesting office should consult with the responsible division publications officer to ensure that required approvals are received. (As prescribed in Survey Manual Chapter 431.5, internal directives are not internal newsletters and are not subject to the provisions of this chapter.)

11. Delegation of Approving Authority by the Director. On March 18, 1992, the Director delegated authority to approve publications and oral presentations to the Division Chiefs (Memorandum to the Director from the Chief Geologist, December 13, 1991, on Redelegation of Director's Approval for Publications). At their discretion, they may redelegate this authority to appropriate senior Division

personnel. Before authorizing publication of written products or final production and distribution of other products, these designees must ensure that each publication, motion picture, slide show, audio tape recording, video tape recording, public service announcement, and internal newsletter is consistent with Department and USGS publications and management policies and is of public benefit, impartial, and scientifically sound. Each Division's procedure for publication approval is outlined in Appendix A. Matters of urgent policy concern should be discussed with the Director and the Director's staff at any time.

12. Policy Review. If during the review process it is determined that a report or product may be of a particularly sensitive nature, such as involving issues or concerns that have current policy implications, or involve matters of national interest, security, or potential commercial gain, then the appropriate member of the Director's staff should be advised. At that time, it can be determined in consultation with other Bureau and Departmental officials whether release of the information could cause conflict with either USGS, Departmental, or Administration policy. It will be the responsibility of the Division Chiefs to ensure that publications and reports personnel who are charged with approval authority are aware of current policy issues, as outlined in SM 500.8.

[Return to Survey Manual Table of Contents](#)

[Return to Survey Manual Index](#)

[Return to Survey Manual Home Page](#)

U.S. Geological Survey, 807 National Center, Reston, VA 20192, USA

URL: <http://www.usgs.gov/usgs-manual/500/500-9.html>

Contact: [OIS, Corporate Information Technology Branch](#)

Content Information Contact: jcordyac@usgs.gov

Last modification: 19-Aug-2002@07:31 (bt)