

## 4.0 GENERAL PROTOCOLS FOR FIELD NOTES

### Overview

Good sampling practice involves the use of detailed field notes. Specific information about seemingly unimportant facts, such as the time of day or weather conditions, is often significant when interpreting data. A field logbook (3-ring binder with water proof paper) for each project is mandatory. All field measurements should be entered directly into this logbook while in the field. All information recorded in the logbook should be entered into a database immediately upon return from the field.

In addition to documenting standard conditions and measurements, field staff are responsible for noting any unusual occurrences. Any deviations from standard protocols (e.g., samples taken from a different location due to safety or access considerations or procedures used that differ from those outlined here) must be recorded in the database. Upon observing an anomalous condition, such as an unusual colour or odour, excessive algal growth, indications that foreign substances have entered the system (oil slicks, surface films, etc.), or fish kills, the field investigator should take samples in addition to those required by the project design.

Field notes that are taken during sampling are often critical in the interpretation of the data, in some cases even several months or years after the sampling event has taken place. Another advantage of keeping good field notes is that notes can be reviewed prior to completing additional sampling. This can be helpful if sample collection points change throughout the year. By noting historical records, it is possible to collect more representative samples, thereby ensuring the integrity of the sample. Historical records provide insight into the preparation of a sampling trip and the possible hazards or conditions that a site may contain.

### Sources

British Columbia MWLAP (2003), Environment Canada and B.C. WLAP (2005 c), Alberta Environment (2006 a), EMAN (2005)

### At a glance

*information  
to be  
recorded*

**1** Record standard information for the site, including site name and number, date and time of day, sample collector's names, GPS or other coordinates, etc.

**2** It is critical that the following parameters be recorded at each site as soon as the measurement has been taken:

- field measurements of air and water temperatures,
- pH,

- water clarity,
- dissolved oxygen and specific conductivity (or other).

Field instruments are available to measure the parameters (listed above) individually and as multi-meters. Specific field instruments coincide with devices that can record and log data in situ.

*preserving  
information  
and notes*

**3** Unusual conditions that may interfere with the collection of a representative sample should be documented.

**4** Preferably, this information will be recorded on water-proof paper, handheld device or laptop and filed in a specific area for each site.

**5** Samplers must avoid taking all field notes for a site with them during each sampling event; since this potentially can lead to the loss of a significant amount of information should an accident occur.

**6** Laboratory submission sheets need to be completed by the sampler identifying the date and location of the sample and any field measurements.

#### **Other sources**

ISO 2008 (b), Alberta Environment (2006 a), Environment Canada Undated (a)