

for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (ii) evaluate the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (iii) enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (iv) minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses. EPA will consider the comments received and amend the ICR as appropriate. The final ICR package will then be submitted to OMB for review and approval. At that time, EPA will issue another **Federal Register** notice to announce the submission of the ICR to OMB and the opportunity to submit additional comments to OMB.

**Abstract:** This notice announces the collection of information related to the U.S. EPA National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) Grant Program. EPA proposes to collect information from the NEIEN grantees on assistance agreements EPA has awarded. Specifically, for each project, EPA proposes to have grantees submit semi-annual reports on the progress and current status of each goal and output, completion dates for outputs, and any problems encountered. This information will help EPA ensure projects are on schedule to meet their goals and produce high quality environmental outputs. The Quality Assurance Reporting Form provides a simple means for grant recipients to describe how quality will be addressed throughout their projects. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Reporting Form is derived from guidelines provided in the NEIEN 2011 Grant Solicitation Notice.

**Form numbers:** EPA Form 5300-26 (Semi-Annual Progress Report Form) and EPA Form 5300-27 (Quality Assurance Reporting Form).

**Respondents/affected entities:** State, tribal, and territorial environmental government offices.

**Respondent's obligation to respond:** Mandatory (40 CFR part 31).

**Estimated number of respondents:** 200 (total).

**Frequency of response:** Twice per year for the Semi-Annual Progress Report Form; one time per grant for the Quality Assurance Reporting Form.

**Total estimated burden:** 340 hours (per year). Burden is defined at 5 CFR 1320.03(b)

**Total estimated cost:** \$17,979 (per year), includes \$0 annualized capital or operation & maintenance costs.

**Changes in estimates:** There is a decrease of 5 hours in the total estimated respondent burden compared with the ICR currently approved by OMB. This decrease is due to a decrease in the number of grants that are awarded annually.

Dated: January 8, 2015.

**Charles Freeman,**

*Associate Director, Information Exchange and Services Division.*

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-9921-28-ORD]

### Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the availability of the final report titled, "Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence" (EPA/600/R-14/475F). The purpose of this report is to summarize the current understanding about the connectivity and mechanisms by which streams and wetlands affect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of downstream waters.

The report is available via the Internet on the EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD), National Center for Environmental Assessment's Web site ([www.epa.gov/ncea](http://www.epa.gov/ncea)) under the Recent Additions and Publications menu.

**DATES:** The Agency is releasing the report publicly on January 15, 2015.

**ADDRESSES:** The report is available primarily via the Internet on the EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD), National Center for Environmental Assessment's Web site ([www.epa.gov/ncea](http://www.epa.gov/ncea)) under the Recent Additions and Publications menu. A limited number of paper copies will be available from the Information Management Team, National Center for Environmental Assessment; telephone 703-347-8561; facsimile: 703-347-8691. If you are requesting a paper copy,

please provide your name, your mailing address, and the document title.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For additional information concerning the assessment, contact EPA National Center for Environmental Assessment, Dr. Laurie Alexander, telephone 703-347-8630 or email [Alexander.Laurie@epa.gov](mailto:Alexander.Laurie@epa.gov).

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Information About the Project/Document

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD) developed this report to review and synthesize the peer-reviewed scientific literature on the connectivity or isolation of streams and wetlands relative to large water bodies such as rivers, lakes, estuaries, and oceans. The purpose of the report, "Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence," is to summarize the current understanding about the connectivity and mechanisms by which streams and wetlands, singly or in aggregate, affect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of downstream waters. The report addresses three main questions related to connectivity:

(1) What are the physical, chemical, and biological connections to, and effects of, ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial stream on downstream waters?

(2) What are the physical, chemical, and biological connections to, and effects of, riparian or floodplain wetlands and open-waters on downstream waters?

(3) What are the physical, chemical, and biological connections to, and effects of, wetlands and open-waters in non-floodplain settings on downstream waters?

This report informs development of a rule proposed by EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to clarify the definition of waters of the United States under the Clean Water Act (<http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters>).

Dated: December 30, 2014.

**Lynn Flowers,**

*Acting Deputy Director, National Center for Environmental Assessment.*

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