



## United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive  
Reston, Virginia 20192-0002

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Attention: Ms. Patricia Orlando  
Post Office Box 66783  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87193

March 6, 2024

Mr. Jeremy Singer-Vine  
The Data Liberation Project  
[jsvine@gmail.com](mailto:jsvine@gmail.com)

*Transmitted by electronic mail*

Re: U.S. Geological Survey Freedom of Information Act Tracking # DOI-USGS-2023-003302 –  
Final Response

Dear Mr. Singer-Vine:

This is our final response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), dated March 13, 2023, in which you requested the following records:

1. All high-resolution water use data which contributed to the aggregated water use inventory. This request includes data in any machine-readable formats such as text files, CSV, or Excel files.
2. All relevant database/inventory documentation which contributes to the understanding of the form and function of this data. This may include data dictionaries, record layouts, relational diagrams, user guides or glossaries.

We have enclosed 52 Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) spreadsheets, which are being released to you in part. Portions of these materials, which identify the location of water supply infrastructure, are being withheld. We reasonably foresee that disclosure of this information is prohibited by law or otherwise protected from disclosure and would harm an interest protected by one or more of the

nine exemptions to the FOIA's general rule of disclosure; therefore, these portions are protected from release pursuant to FOIA Exemption 7(F) and Exemption 9.

Exemption 7 protects from disclosure "records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes" if the records fall within one or more of six specific bases for withholding set forth in subparts (A) through (F). [5 U.S.C. § 552\(b\)\(7\)\(A\)-\(F\)](#). We are withholding any location information, such as latitude and longitude or addresses, and identifying information, such as station id and name, which may refer to location information from another source for all water supply infrastructure in part under Exemption 7 because they are protected under the following subpart:

Exemption 7(F) protects law enforcement records if their release could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual. For the materials that have been withheld under 7(F), we have determined releasing them could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of an individual because it would compromise the location and protection of the public water supply infrastructure and endanger the life and physical safety of inhabitants of the cities supplied by public water supply systems across the nation.

Exemption 9 protects from disclosure "geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells." We are withholding any location information, such as latitude and longitude or addresses, and identifying information, such as station id and name, which may refer to location information from another source for all wells within this dataset under Exemption 9.

Safe drinking water is a prerequisite for protecting public health and all human activity. Properly treated wastewater is vital for preventing disease and protecting the environment. Thus, ensuring the supply of drinking water and wastewater treatment and service is essential to modern life and the nation's economy.

The station identification and location information contained in this dataset constitutes a security risk by providing an easy-to-use gateway to information on the locations and characteristics of the water intakes in the United States. For example, this dataset provides easily searchable information that could enable terrorist activities that seek to threaten or disrupt major water suppliers. Therefore, this dataset meets the law enforcement, the life endangerment, and the physical safety thresholds to invoke Exemption 7F.

Patricia Orlando, USGS Government Information Specialist is responsible for this partial denial. Jennifer Heindl, Attorney-Advisor in the Office of the Solicitor, was consulted on this response.

We classified you as an "other-use" requester and granted your request for a fee waiver for this information. Therefore, there is no fee for the processing of this request.

You may appeal this response to the Department's FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer. If you choose to appeal, the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer must receive your FOIA appeal **no later than 90 workdays** from the date of this final response. Appeals arriving or delivered after 5 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, will be deemed received on the next workday.

**Your appeal must be made in writing.** You may submit your appeal and accompanying materials to the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer by mail, courier service, fax, or email. All communications concerning your appeal should be clearly marked with the words: "FREEDOM OF INFORMATION APPEAL." You must include an explanation of why you believe this response is in error. You must also include with your appeal copies of all correspondence between you and USGS concerning your FOIA request, including your original FOIA request and this response. Failure to include with your appeal all correspondence between you and USGS will result in the Department's rejection of your appeal, unless the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer determines (in the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer's sole discretion) that good cause exists to accept the defective appeal.

Please include your name and daytime telephone number (or the name and telephone number of an appropriate contact), email address and fax number (if available) in case the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer needs additional information or clarification of your appeal.

*DOI FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office Contact Information*

Department of the Interior  
Office of the Solicitor  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
MS-6556 MIB  
Washington, DC 20240

Attn: FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Office

Telephone: (202) 208-5339  
Fax: (202) 208-6677  
Email: [FOIA.Appeals@sol.doi.gov](mailto:FOIA.Appeals@sol.doi.gov)

The 2007 FOIA amendments created the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. You may contact OGIS in any of the following ways:

Office of Government Information Services  
National Archives and Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road - OGIS  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
E-mail: [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov)  
Web: <https://www.archives.gov/ogis>  
Telephone: 202-741-5770  
Fax: 202-741-5769  
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

Please note that using OGIS services does not affect the timing of filing an appeal with the Department's FOIA & Privacy Act Appeals Officer.

Contact information for the Department's FOIA Public Liaison, who you may also seek dispute resolution services from, is available at <https://www.doi.gov/foia/foiacenters>.

If you have any questions about our response to your request, you may contact Patricia Orlando by phone at (916) 365-6479, or by email at [foia@usgs.gov](mailto:foia@usgs.gov).

Sincerely,

Patricia Orlando  
Government Information Specialist  
U. S. Geological Survey