**INTRODUCTION**

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the state’s lead agency for environmental management and stewardship by protecting air, water and land. DEP is divided into three primary areas: land and recreation, regulatory, and ecosystem restoration.

The Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (RCP) is part of the ecosystem restoration area of DEP and manages more than 4.5 million acres of submerged lands and coastal uplands. The Office oversees the Florida Coastal Management Program, Clean Boating Program, 41 Aquatic Preserves (AP), three National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR), Florida Resilient Coastlines Program, Florida Coral Reef Conservation Program, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and activities on the Outer Continental Shelf.

The RCP’s continuous water quality monitoring program began in 1995 with the onset of the NERR’s System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) at Apalachicola NERR and was expanded to the Aquatic Preserve sites in late 2003 in an effort to improve the availability of continuous estuarine water quality data. Data are collected in 15-minute intervals for eight parameters (water temperature, specific conductivity, salinity, dissolved oxygen percent, dissolved oxygen mg/L, depth, pH and turbidity) and more than fifty percent of the stations have over 10-years of data. These data are used by resource managers, planners, permitting agencies, educators, and scientists to address specific coastal management needs, promote conservation of estuarine habitats, and improve future monitoring and restoration efforts.

Data are evaluated by RCP staff for validity based on weather data, field observations, graphs and instrument diagnostics. Aquatic Preserve data are available to the public through a web-based data portal ([www.FloridaAPData.org](http://www.FloridaAPData.org)) and have also undergone quality assurance/quality control procedures using the NERR’s SWMP protocols and protocols established by the DEP’s Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration (DEAR).

This document outlines the standard operating procedures (SOP) for the collection of continuous water quality data using YSI/Xylem EXO Multi-Parameter Water Quality datasondes for the DEP’s Aquatic Preserve Program. **This SOP does not replace the YSI/Xylem EXO User Manual**; however it should be used in conjunction with the manufacturer’s manual.

The purpose of the AP continuous water quality SOP is to standardize instrument handling, maintenance, calibration, deployment, and post-deployment procedures for the Aquatic Preserve program. **The procedures in this SOP are the MINIMUM requirements for operating the YSI/Xylem EXO Multi-Parameter Water Quality datasondes; therefore all AP sites must follow these procedures.** Aquatic Preserve sites will undertake additional procedures, such as calibration verifications (bracketing) as outline by the [protocols](https://floridadep.gov/dear/quality-assurance/content/dep-sops) established by the DEP’s Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration (DEAR) to ensure quality data collection. By following the procedures in this SOP, all sites will be capable of collecting quality data and will be able to effectively review the data after collection and seamlessly combine the AP data with NERR data for assessments.