



ISO 9001 AND 14001 CERTIFIED

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** AUGUST 3, 2006  
**TO:** John Arterburn, Colville Confederated Tribes  
**FROM:** Rebekka Lindskoog, Summit  
**RE:** DATE FORMAT IN DATABASE  
**FILE:** 652-01.01

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As you are aware, Summit has been retained to develop and maintain the OBMEP database. As part of this project, Summit will coordinate with other entities within the region that are performing monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure compatibility of the OBMEP database with other regional efforts.

I have reviewed the Northwest Environmental Data-Network (NED) White Paper: Best Practices for Reporting Location and Time related data to investigate potential compatibility issues and have concerns regarding the format recommended for date elements. The paper suggests that dates should be stored in the database in the U.S. short date format: MM/DD/YYYY.

This recommendation causes me some concern as the short date format for European countries (including Canada) is DD/MM/YYYY. Microsoft products (e.g., Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access) installed on computers in these countries will automatically default to the format of the country which it operates in. This setting can be changed on an individual computer through the Control Panel – Regional Settings.

Fortunately, the software will automatically switch the format as long as the field is formatted as DATE/TIME, therefore data functions such as sorting/graphing/charting and formulas will work correctly, no matter what the regional settings are in the computer. However, having the dates in the short date format will increase the potential for data entry and interpretation errors, particularly with international database users (e.g., 04/05/2006 could be interpreted as April 5 or as May 4).

I suggest that the dates be formatted as the universal medium date DD-MMM-YYYY (e.g., 04-Apr-2006). This format is recognized by Microsoft products internationally and eliminates confusion when interpreting and entering data.

Please contact me if you require further details.