



United States Geological Survey

Reston Stable Isotope Laboratory

Report of Stable Isotopic Composition

Reference Material NBS 1

(Hydrogen and Oxygen Isotopes in Water)

This reference material (RM) is intended for daily normalization of stable hydrogen-isotope ($\delta^2\text{H}$) and oxygen-isotope ($\delta^{18}\text{O}$) measurements of unknown waters with an isotope-ratio mass spectrometer or a laser absorption spectrometer. A unit of this RM consists of one 50-mL glass ampoule of steam condensate from Potomac River water [1,2].

Recommended Values: Stable hydrogen and oxygen isotopic compositions are expressed herein as delta values [3] relative to VSMOW (Standard Mean Ocean Water) on scales normalized such that the $\delta^2\text{H}$ and $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ values of SLAP (Standard Light Antarctic Precipitation) are -428‰ and -55.5‰ , respectively [4,5]. Each stable isotopic composition is given as a reference isotope-delta value with its standard deviation.

Stable hydrogen isotopic composition: $\delta^2\text{H}_{\text{VSMOW-SLAP}} = -47.1 \pm 1.2\text{‰}$ (n = 26) [4]

Stable oxygen isotopic composition: $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{VSMOW-SLAP}} = -7.91 \pm 0.04\text{‰}$ (n = 4) [6]

Technical coordination for this RM was provided by Haiping Qi of the Reston Stable Isotope Laboratory (RSIL).

Expiration of Reference Value: The reference values for the isotopic composition of NBS 1 are valid until December 31, 2049, provided the RM is handled in accordance with the instructions given in this Report of Stable Isotopic Composition (see “Instructions for Use”). A reference value is nullified if the glass ampoule containing the RM is inadvertently broken.

Source of the RM: NBS 1 steam condensate from Potomac River water was sealed in 50-mL ampoules by the National Bureau of Standards (now National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST) [1,2].

Stability: NBS 1 is stable at normal room temperatures. The reference values in this Report of Investigation apply only to freshly opened ampoules.

Instructions for Use: This RM is intended for calibration of instrumentation and for calibrating unknown waters by interspersing aliquots of the RM among water sample unknowns. The unused fraction of this RM should be stored carefully in a glass vial having a conical insert cap to minimize evaporation and resulting isotopic fractionation.

Reporting of Stable-isotope-delta Values: The following recommendations are provided for reporting stable hydrogen and oxygen isotope-delta values [5]. It is recommended that:

- The $\delta^2\text{H}$ values of all hydrogen-bearing substances be expressed relative to VSMOW-SLAP on a scale where $\delta^2\text{H}_{\text{SLAP}} = -428$ ‰ exactly or $\delta^2\text{H}_{\text{SLAP2}} = -427.5$ ‰ [7].
- The $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ values of all oxygen-bearing substances be expressed relative to VSMOW-SLAP or relative to Vienna Pee Dee belemnite (VPDB; for carbonates) on a scale such that the $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of SLAP = -55.5 ‰ relative to VSMOW, and for carbonates, such that $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of NBS 19 calcium carbonate = -2.2 ‰.
- Authors report δ values of international distributed (secondary) isotopic reference materials as though they had been interspersed among and used for normalization of unknowns, as appropriate, for the measurement method. In this manner, measurement results can be adjusted in the future as analytical methods improve and consensus values of internationally distributed isotopic reference materials change.
- Reporting of δ values relative to SMOW and PDB (Pee Dee belemnite) be discontinued [8].

REFERENCES

- [1] Mohler, F. L., 1995, Reference Samples of Isotopic Abundance: Science, v. 122, 334–335. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.122.3164.334>
- [2] Mohler, F. L. 1960, Isotopic Abundance Ratios Reported for Reference Samples Stocked by the National Bureau of Standards. National Bureau of Standards (USA), Technical Note No. 51, 8 p. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GOVPUB-C13-ca35d631c91738e9d9d24459191efcc2>
- [3] Coplen, T. B., 2011, Guidelines and recommended terms for expression of stable-isotope-ratio and gas-ratio measurement results: Rapid Communications in Mass Spectrometry, v. 25, 2538–2560. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rcm.5129>

- [4] Gonfiantini, R., 1978, Standards for stable isotope measurements in natural compounds: *Nature*, v. 271, p. 534–536. <https://doi.org/10.1038/271534a0>
- [5] Coplen, T. B., 1994, Reporting of stable hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen isotopic abundances: *Pure and Applied Chemistry*, v. 66, p. 273–276. <https://doi.org/10.1351/pac199466020273>
- [6] Coplen, T. B., Kendall, C., and Hopple, J., 1983, Comparison of stable isotope reference samples: *Nature*, v. 302, p. 236–238. <https://www.nature.com/articles/302236a0>
- [7] International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Reference Sheet for International Measurement Standards, http://nucleus.iaea.org/rpst/Documents/VSMOW2_SLAP2.pdf (last accessed August 2012).
- [8] Coplen, T. B., 1995, Discontinuance of SMOW and PDB: *Nature*, v. 375, 285. <https://doi.org/10.1038/375285a0>