



# Protocols for Measuring Water Velocity in Wadeable Streams and Rivers



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**Bureau of Water Quality  
Division of Environmental Assessment  
Biomonitoring Program**

**Standard Operating Procedure  
Methods for the Global Flow Meter**

- 1. Applicability.** This standard operating procedure (SOP) is used by the Biomonitoring Program to collect flow velocity data (cm/sec) from wadeable rivers and streams in Maine using the Global Flow Meters.
- 2. Purpose.** This procedure is used to characterize average velocity conditions in wadeable rivers and streams using a Global flow meter.
- 3. Definitions**
  - A. Global. Type of flow meter manufactured by Global Water Instrumentation, and used by the staff of the Biomonitoring Program of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP).
  - B. Probe. Sensing device with propeller located at the bottom of the meter.
  - C. Calibration. Set of procedures established to ensure that the meter is operating properly; a critical quality assurance step in meter preparation prior to use.
- 4. Responsibilities**
  - A. Training. It is the responsibility of the team leader to ensure that the individual(s) collecting the velocity data have received training in using Global flow meter.
  - B. Data recording. It is the responsibility of the individual collecting the data to record the results and additional qualifying information on standard field sheets obtained from the MDEP Biomonitoring program.
  - C. Data submission. It is the responsibility of the team leader or the staff member collecting the data, as appropriate, to place completed field sheets in the appropriate field sheet folder located in the Biomonitoring staff area.



## 5. Guidelines and Procedures

- A. Sampling period. In the majority of cases, data will be collected concurrently with the sampling of macroinvertebrates or algae.
- B. Flow meter preparation. Not required as meter comes fully operational including calibration.
- C. Data collection
  - (1) Take meter out of case and ensure that propeller moves freely (by blowing on it in direction of flow as indicated by arrow).
  - (2) Refer to the user's manual for instructions on how to operate the specific model.
  - (3) Take measurements in a representative section of the stream near sampling area.
  - (4) Put the probe into the water with the arrow on the bottom of the probe pointing downstream.
  - (5) Taking measurements
    - (a) Macroinvertebrate sampling: collect average velocity from measurements taken around the rock bags/rock baskets. At each location, keep the meter in one spot horizontally but move it slowly up and down for ~20 sec; remove meter from water when moving between locations.
    - (b) Algae sampling: The purpose of this method is to get an average measurement that represents the variety of flows within a reach where algae samples are collected. Collect average velocity measurements at 4-6 locations across a stream reach. Try to represent the range of velocities found where samples were collected. Avoid stream edges. At each point, hold the probe perpendicular to the flow and slowly move the probe up and down for ~20 seconds, making sure that the probe stays at each point in the flow for approximately the same amount of time. Remove meter from water when moving between locations.
  - (6) If the probe gets fouled by algae or debris, then remove the probe from the water and clean the propeller of debris.
  - (7) Record the reading in cm/sec on the field sheet.
  - (8) Allow the case and meter to air-dry at the end of each day by propping the lid open. When contents are very wet, remove the contents and spread out to facilitate drying.
- D. Quality Control
  - (1) Staff from the biomonitoring program must check the precision of measurements amongst the meters once a year at the beginning of the field season (May or early June). For this purpose, the average flow velocity in a location with visible flow will be measured with all three meters. To ensure that the same location is used for all three meters, staff will mark the spot with a meter stick; to ensure that measurements are taken at the same height in the water column, flagging tape will



be tied to the meter stick to indicate the location of the top of the propeller housing.

- (2) At the beginning of each field season, all Biomonitoring Program staff or field personnel who will use the meter covered under this SOP will have a training/refresher session to (re)familiarize themselves with the contents of this SOP and the particulars of the meter. Attendance at the training session will be recorded in the “Tracking staff training” file located in the “Biomonitoring/SOP-Instructions/” folder.

## 6. Equipment Care

### A. Start of field season

- (1) Use new batteries at the start of each sampling season. See manufacturer’s instructions for correct battery replacement procedures.
- (2) Each meter must have in its case the following items for dealing with minor problems in the field:
  - (a) Replacement head for old meter;
  - (b) An extra set of appropriate size batteries; and
  - (c) Screw driver for removing back of old meter head to replace batteries (back of new meter can be opened with coin).

### B. End of field season

- (1) Completely dry meter and case and all items in the case before storing.
- (2) Remove batteries.
- (3) Keep meter dry and at room temperature to prevent corrosion of electronic parts.
- (4) Label the meter and case as ‘WINTERIZED, (date)’ in an obvious manner (so users will know the current status of the unit).

## 8. References.

Instruction manuals for Global Flow meter models FP101, FP201, and FP111