

## ***Recommendations for Implementing the Quality Assurance Plan***

*Recommendation 1:* Currently, the Hands on the Land web site does not fully conform to U.S. Government Printing Office Style. We recommend that an editor be contracted to perform a thorough edit of member-posted content, glossary, and site tours.

*Recommendation 2:* Funding should be secured or a method of service continuation be established to maintain server costs and maintenance fees. Hands on the Land's ColdFusion-based web site is hosted by MarketMatrix, Inc.

*Recommendation 3:* Funding should be secured or a method of service continuation be established to contract with an editor to perform basic editing services to assure the quality of member-posted materials.

*Recommendation 4:* Funding should be secured or a method of service continuation be established to contract with a web site technical administrator to perform the basic duty of maintaining the architectural, coding, and design integrity of the web site. This person would also perform the task of training new members in the use of the web site's content management system.

*Recommendation 5:* The web site's permission system currently allows any manager-level member to edit any member-posted educator resource or bulletin articles. The editing of educator resources and bulletin articles should be restricted to the members of the site who posted that material. Full-editing privileges of the educator resources should be limited to administrators only.

*Recommendation 6:* Under the current web site architecture, for agency-level users to review membership applications, they must be defined as administrators. A mid-level permission called "agency" should be created so that these users cannot access technically-critical content.

*Recommendation 7:* On-line interactive training tools should be developed to help content managing users learn how to use Hands on the Land's web site. With the current technology that Hands on the Land uses, these tools may be created with Macromedia Flash.

*Recommendation 8:* For the redesign process to be most effective, needs assessment surveys should be done to include all significant audiences of the Hands on the Land web site. A needs assessment survey has already been performed for program providers, but this assessment should be extended to teachers and our other audience base. These should be performed in a direct way to a focus group of teachers and students. A needs assessment survey should also be installed permanently on the web site in a manner similar to the random Search Field and Data Input Usability Survey that is currently posted on the web site.

*Recommendation 9* – To increase the teacher user-base of Hands on the Land, we recommend providing custom Hands on the Land lesson plans for the use of the web site in the classroom. We recommend creating lesson plans for these three usages:

- a) Promote the use and learning within the Hot Topics section. Creating on-line materials for teachers and students will help to foster a deeper understanding of issues critical to the federal agencies.
- b) Encourage students to publish reports, essays and creative materials that increase awareness of issues critical to Hands on the Land member sites. Authorship lesson plans will help increase students' awareness of issues important to member sites.
- c) Support the environmental monitoring activities of member sites through increased awareness of the Hands-on Science databases that Hands on the Land offers. On-line, interactive lesson plans should be created which will encourage students to analyze the data that other classrooms have posted on-line.

*Recommendation 10:* Hands on the Land should partner with other educational organizations, which are closely related to the public and private school system in order to encourage a deeper relationship in the educational community. Having these partners will help improve the quality of the materials that Hands on the Land provides to classrooms.

*Recommendation 11:* On-line interactive training tools should be developed to help program providers learn how to build relationships with students, teachers, and school districts. With the current technology that Hands on the Land uses, these tools may be created with web-based video and Macromedia Flash.