

---

# News Release



UNITED  
STATES  
GOVERNMENT  
PRINTING  
OFFICE

---

Office of Congressional and Public Affairs 202-512-1991 <http://www.gpo.gov>

---

**For Release: IMMEDIATE**  
January 16, 2002

**Contact: Andrew M. Sherman**  
202-512-1991  
[asherma@gpo.gov](mailto:asherma@gpo.gov)  
No. 02-04

## STATEMENT ON REQUEST TO WITHDRAW USGS SOURCE-WATER CD-ROM FROM DEPOSITORY LIBRARIES

The following is a statement of the facts regarding the October 2001 request by the Superintendent of Documents to certain Federal depository libraries to withdraw from public circulation and destroy their depository copies of a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) CD-ROM providing information on water resources:

- By letter dated October 12, 2001, Superintendent of Documents Francis J. Buckley, Jr. requested Federal depository libraries to withdraw and destroy their depository copies of a USGS CD-ROM entitled *Source Area Characteristics of Large Public Surface-Water Supplies in the Conterminous United States: An Information Resource for Source-Water Assessment, 1999*. The Superintendent of Documents is the Government Printing Office (GPO) official who by law is responsible for the operation of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), under which the GPO distributes copies of Federal publications to designated libraries for the use of the public.
- The Superintendent of Documents' letter was issued pursuant to a letter from the USGS, dated October 5, 2001, which asked the GPO to "request that depository libraries receiving the [Source-Water CD-ROM] be instructed to destroy their copies." When a member of the library community questioned the USGS on the need for this action, a USGS e-mail reply dated October 31, 2001, said: "Subsequent contact with the Government Printing Office and the USGS Committee that sets official policy on restriction of sensitive information has reconfirmed the validity of the original written instruction from USGS and GPO to destroy the report."
- The Superintendent of Documents' October 12 letter went to the 335 Federal depository libraries which had selected this document for their collections (there are 1,310 Federal depository libraries nationwide). The letter was subsequently published in the Superintendent of Documents publication "Administrative Notes," which is made available to the entire depository library community and is posted online on the GPO's Web site, at [www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov). The Superintendent of Documents' request applied only to copies of the Source-Water CD-ROM distributed under the FDLP.

- The Superintendent of Documents' request followed established policy for the withdrawal of documents from the FDLP. This policy has been communicated in writing to all Federal depository libraries. Under the FDLP, the Government may request the removal of materials from depository libraries since the law (chapter 19 of Title 44) indicates that all FDLP materials remain Government property. Requests to withdraw happen rarely, however. Since FY 1995, the GPO has distributed 230,019 tangible product (print, microfiche, and CD-ROM) titles to depository libraries, and recalled just 20 (16 to be destroyed, 3 returned to the agency, 1 removed from shelves). Such actions are taken only on the request of the issuing agency, most commonly because the titles contain information that is erroneous or has been superseded. The Superintendent of Documents has no statutory ability to deny agency document withdrawal requests, but instead serves as the statutory conduit for carrying them out. Prior to initiating any withdrawal request, the Superintendent of Documents' policy is to carefully review each request and ensure that all such requests to GPO are made in writing.

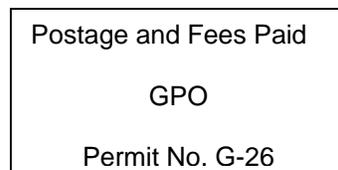
In partnership with Federal depository libraries, the GPO has been the Government's agent for providing public access to Government information for nearly two centuries. The GPO takes very seriously any Federal agency's request to restrict access to Government information that has been made public. However, the GPO also has a duty under the law to cooperate with Federal agencies in the appropriate distribution of the official information they publish. Since the September 11 attacks, the USGS CD-ROM is the only document that the Superintendent of Documents has requested to be withdrawn from depository libraries. Any future agency withdrawal requests will be handled in accordance with law and established policy.

**United States Government Printing Office  
Washington, DC 20401**

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS**

**Penalty for Private Use, \$300**

**Mail Stop: LP**



**FIRST-CLASS MAIL**