Agriculture Laboratory Proficiency (ALP) Program

Test Instructions

Five jars of soil, four jars of botanicals, and three bottles of water are provided each cycle for the analyses offered in the ALP Program. Each sample is assigned a sample code, SRS codes are used for soils, SRB for botanicals, and SRW for water. These prefixes are followed by a four-digit number, with the first two digits being the year of the cycle. Each sample code corresponds to the sample codes on the provided data sheet. Laboratories must ensure that the results for each analysis are recorded in the corresponding column on the datasheet.

If any samples are missing or damaged, please notify CTS immediately.

All tests are to be performed in-house on ALP Program samples. If you typically contract an outside laboratory for a particular analysis, do not report results for that analysis. **It is not necessary to perform every test in order to be included in the report.** Participants are forbidden from collusion with other participating laboratories in the program.

Testing the Sample Materials

- Review the data sheets and the sample materials for the cycle to determine which analyses you plan to complete. It is suggested that you do not open sample containers until you are ready to test. Plan to conduct any testing that is time sensitive immediately after preparation and follow with more time-stable testing.

- Labs are encouraged to submit results as triplicate measures when possible to allow the program to evaluate within laboratory consistency, even if this is not your laboratory's usual procedure. However, fewer than three results are still accepted on submission. When submitting triplicate results, **always use the same instrument and procedure** throughout an individual assay and conduct the testing consecutively for each assay. For example, do not use one procedure/assay for replicates 1 and 2 then switch to a different procedure for replicate 3. Similarly, do not conduct testing for replicates 1 and 2 then testing for replicate 3 at a later date.

- The units for each test are listed on the data sheets and on the portal data entry form. **Please ensure that results are converted to the correct units before submitting data**. Below detection limit (BDL) data should be reported, but will not be included in the analysis.

- Samples for soil, botanicals and water are delivered in a ready-to-test state; no additional preparation is required outside that required by individual test methods.

- The reference methods for each assay in the program are those published in SOIL, PLANT AND WATER REFERENCE METHODS FOR THE WESTERN REGION S-3.60 (3rd Edition, 2005). Methods recommended by the other regional workgroups (NCR-13,

SERA-6, NCERA-107), the Forestry Canada Methods Manual, as well as other published methods may be used if technical equivalency is established. You can find a list of our sub test codes and their corresponding MODUS code here.

Carbon Sequestration Testing

- Test immediately after the sample pack is opened in the order indicated on the data sheet
- Samples have been pre-split into three bags. Each bag must be tested separately, and the three results reported as triplicates.
- Do not combine or subdivide contents of the bag prior to analysis. Each bag represents one replicate.

Returning program results

- Data must be received by the data due date to be included in the report. The data due date is included on each data sheet as well as posted on the customer portal for each cycle. Laboratories have 6 weeks between shipment and the data due date.

  CTS recommends using our online portal (www.cts-portal.com) to submit data.

  Participants are advised that the full Participant Code is used to log into the portal (e.g. U1234A).

  Results can be entered into the supplied data sheet, and that data sheet can then be uploaded to the portal. It is the responsibility of the participant to verify the correct translation of the data sheet by viewing the portal data submission form after the upload.

- Participant results may also be submitted by email. Completed data sheets can be emailed to alp@cts-interlab.com.

  Please ensure the emailed results were received by CTS. We will typically confirm receipt by email confirmation within 2 business days. Please contact CTS if confirmation is not received.

If you require assistance, please contact the ALP Program Coordinator at alp@cts-interlab.com or at +1-571-434-1925.