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U.S. Energy Information
Administration

Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION for 2011 through 2013

September 2014



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Introduction

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) is the statistical and analytical agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). EIA collects, analyzes, and disseminates independent and impartial energy information to promote sound policymaking, efficient markets, and public understanding of the energy industry and its interaction with the economy and the environment. EIA is the United States' premier source of energy information. EIA data, analyses, and forecasts are independent of approval by any other officer or employee of the U.S. government.

The Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report (WNGSR) is EIA's only report designated as a Principal Federal Economic Indicator (PFEI). The WNGSR collects inventories of natural gas in underground storage and was designated as a PFEI in January 2008, because it is a key source of weekly natural gas supply data to the natural gas market. Upon release of the WNGSR, the natural gas market reacts to the derived net change in inventory levels collected on WNGSR from the prior week. Better information on the nature of the net changes between weekly inventory data reports is helpful in informing trading decisions that often move natural gas prices 3 to 5 cents each week upon release of the WNGSR. For most respondents in most weeks, the difference between inventory levels from one week to the next reflects the flow of natural gas into or out of storage that the natural gas market utilizes. Sometimes, however, a storage facility may have inventory adjustments, such as reclassifications from working to base gas that can obscure the actual flow into or out of the storage facility. For this reason, EIA is attempting to better identify and understand these adjustments by proposing that a new data element be added to the WNGSR through an upcoming Information Collection Review (ICR). This element, inventory adjustments of working gas in storage, would help identify when adjustments to working gas inventories occur. Additionally, based on a review of measures of the net changes, including confidence intervals around the net changes, EIA is also proposing to reduce the threshold at which these reclassifications and revisions to prior weeks' data would be published from 7 billion cubic feet (Bcf) to 4 Bcf. Publishing the reclassifications and revisions at the lower threshold would increase the transparency of the inventory adjustments to the public and also better distinguish net changes in inventory from flow-related activity.

As the WNGSR is currently designed, it collects data on the amount of working natural gas¹ in underground storage facilities as of Friday at 9:00 a.m. CST. EIA compiles and processes these data for release on its website the following Thursday at 10:30 a.m. ET. Summary totals of working gas inventories and the derived net change from the prior week's inventory for the United States are broken into three regions: the West, the East, and the Producing Region. Totals for the Producing Region are further divided into salt and nonsalt subcategories according to facility type. The upcoming ICR, 1905-1975, will include a proposal for five geographic breakdowns in order to enhance analysis and usability of the data.

¹ Working Natural Gas is natural gas in storage that is currently available to the marketplace.

EIA submits this report in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget’s Statistical Policy Directive Number 3, which requires each agency that issues a PFEI to report every three years on its performance. OMB Directive Number 3 requires that this performance evaluation address the “accuracy and reliability of the series, the effects of revisions, and performance relative of established benchmarks”² as well as other standards for documentation, promptness in releasing estimates, and avoidance of premature disclosure. This performance evaluation is divided into five sections:

1. The accuracy and reliability of the weekly working gas inventory series
2. The accuracy, completeness, and accessibility of documentation
3. The release schedule performance and avoidance of early disclosure
4. The protection of market sensitive information
5. The public engagement and enhancement of the product

I. Accuracy and reliability of the series

The WNGSR receives weekly survey data from a sample selected with probability proportional to size of operators of underground storage facilities.³ The WNGSR survey form, designated Form EIA-912, collects data on the volumes of working gas in storage. The frame for the EIA-912 is the list of respondents that report on EIA’s Monthly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report, Form EIA-191, which is a census of operators of underground natural gas storage fields in the United States. EIA aggregates EIA-191 data by state and storage region, and reports the data with a two-month lag in the Natural Gas Monthly.

Sampling error

EIA uses a bootstrap method⁴ to compute standard errors for the weekly underground storage inventory data reported on the WNGSR, because the EIA-912 estimator is a complex, nonsmooth function, and the sample design is stratified. The bootstrap method has the most flexibility in dealing with the EIA-912’s small sampling fractions and nonsmooth estimator. EIA calculates standard errors and coefficients of variation for the inventory information reported for the West, East, and Producing Regions, as well as on a national level (Table 1). The target level for estimate coefficients of variation is 3%, and the EIA-912 estimate coefficients of variation fall below this target at the national level. Regionally, the EIA-912 estimate coefficients of variation generally fall within the target level in all regions, though the West region has on occasion had estimated coefficients of variation that have been above the target level. The instances of coefficients of variation in the West above the target level, based on bootstrap standard errors, result from the small number of companies in the region. EIA is currently proposing additional geographic breakdowns for the WNGSR which may affect the number of operators sampled. In addition to computing standard errors for the weekly underground storage inventory data, EIA also computed standard errors on week-to-week changes for several processing

² Federal Register, Vol. 50, No. 186, Office of Management and Budget (September 25, 1985), pp. 38932-34, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/inforeg/statpolicy/dir_3_fr_09251985.pdf.

³ U.S. Energy Information Administration, Methodology, November 25, 2008, <http://ir.eia.gov/ngs/methodology.html>.

⁴ Efron, B., and Tibshirani, R. J., *An Introduction to the Bootstrap*, (New York: Chapman & Hall, 1993).

periods. Analysis of the standard errors on week-to-week changes helped support a change in the current revision threshold from 7 Bcf to 4 Bcf for reclassifications and revisions to prior weeks' data.

Differences between monthly and interpolated weekly values

Comparing the WNGSR series (EIA-912) with monthly working gas inventories reported in the Natural Gas Monthly (EIA-191) provides an additional benchmark to evaluate the performance of the WNGSR. As a census survey, rather than a sample survey, the monthly data are generally considered more accurate than the weekly data because there is no sampling error. In addition, because there is more time available for respondents to report their data and for EIA to review it, the incidence of error in measurement is reduced. To perform the weekly-to-monthly comparison, a simple average daily interpolation is used to transform the weekly series into a monthly series that coincides with the last calendar day of the month.

On a national level, the average absolute difference between the weekly and the monthly series for the period from 2011 to 2013 was 0.5% of monthly working gas levels (13 billion cubic feet (Bcf)), and the root mean square error was 16 Bcf (Table 2).

Factors contributing to the difference between the weekly and monthly working gas series include:

- Limitations of the weekly-to-monthly interpolation method which does not recognize daily variability of storage activity
- Revisions or resubmissions of data on the EIA-912 below the current publication threshold of 7 Bcf
- Reclassification between base gas⁵ and working gas during the two-month lag between collecting the two series
- Volume estimates for the nonsampled weekly operators that differ from actual values
- Preliminary weekly estimates reported by respondents on the EIA-912, compared with finalized data reported on the EIA-191

⁵ Base gas is the volume of gas needed to maintain adequate reservoir pressures and deliverability rates. Base gas is not typically available for withdrawal.

Table 1. Standard errors and coefficients of variation for the underground storage working gas inventory data reported on WNGSR, 2011-13

Week	Standard error				Coefficient of variation			
	East	Producing	West	National	East	Producing	West	National
1/28/2011	13.89	18.21	11.55	24.99	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
2/25/2011	10.43	18.12	8.70	24.97	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
3/25/2011	9.70	18.75	6.96	21.15	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
4/29/2011	9.31	19.83	6.94	24.09	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
5/27/2011	9.10	17.67	8.04	20.36	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
7/1/2011	14.60	18.12	12.26	27.99	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
7/29/2011	14.83	16.49	14.68	24.84	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
8/26/2011	18.64	16.73	15.20	27.78	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
9/30/2011	21.17	21.54	17.01	36.54	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
10/28/2011	29.33	21.48	16.62	38.89	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
11/25/2011	25.87	22.06	18.04	36.54	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
12/30/2011	13.89	18.21	11.55	24.99	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
1/27/2012	17.80	22.83	11.05	29.73	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
3/2/2012	14.06	28.21	10.17	31.96	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
3/23/2012	13.75	23.80	8.53	28.63	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01
4/27/2012	14.30	24.02	10.23	26.39	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
6/1/2012	19.16	24.28	12.28	31.30	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
6/29/2012	16.02	24.35	14.91	32.87	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
7/27/2012	15.48	25.74	16.97	34.44	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
8/31/2012	19.27	23.03	20.56	36.16	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
9/28/2012	20.12	31.55	20.21	43.40	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01
11/2/2012	24.29	33.27	20.05	46.10	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01
11/30/2012	22.53	31.04	18.71	44.18	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01
1/4/2013	19.43	31.20	15.77	40.21	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
2/1/2013	15.42	33.13	12.71	37.87	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
3/1/2013	12.14	23.23	11.27	28.42	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
3/29/2013	8.48	22.69	10.16	26.18	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02
4/26/2013	8.91	24.83	9.17	28.45	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02
5/31/2013	10.51	26.76	12.00	31.58	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
6/28/2013	12.42	28.28	15.68	30.85	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01
7/26/2013	15.67	28.27	16.37	37.54	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.01
8/30/2013	15.49	25.64	18.11	34.52	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
9/27/2013	18.45	32.40	18.24	40.11	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01
11/1/2013	22.22	31.45	19.98	44.16	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.01
12/13/2013	19.05	30.30	13.31	39.20	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.01

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-912, Weekly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report, 2013

Table 2. Differences between interpolated end of month from weekly and published monthly working gas estimates, 2011-13

Month End	Monthly from weekly values (Bcf)				Natural gas monthly (Bcf)				Difference from natural gas monthly values(Bcf)				Percentage difference from natural Gas Monthly Values			
	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48
11-Jan	1,118	827	318	2,263	1,124	854	330	2,308	-6	-27	-12	-45	-0.50%	-3.20%	-3.60%	-1.90%
11-Feb	783	699	233	1,715		698	235	1,724	-8	1	-2	-9	-1.00%	0.10%	-0.90%	-0.50%
11-Mar	623	742	220	1,585	618	738	225	1,581	5	4	-5	4	0.80%	0.50%	-2.20%	0.30%
11-Apr	713	820	234	1,767	727	824	238	1,789	-14	-4	-4	-22	-1.90%	-0.50%	-1.70%	-1.20%
11-May	939	930	283	2,153	951	949	287	2,188	-12	-19	-4	-35	-1.30%	-2.00%	-1.40%	-1.60%
11-Jun	1,180	985	349	2,513	1,188	992	350	2,530	-8	-7	-1	-17	-0.70%	-0.70%	-0.30%	-0.70%
11-Jul	1,390	976	398	2,765	1,395	981	398	2,774	-5	-5	0	-9	-0.40%	-0.50%	0.00%	-0.30%
11-Aug	1,619	958	429	3,007	1,625	967	427	3,020	-6	-9	2	-13	-0.40%	-0.90%	0.50%	-0.40%
11-Sep	1,881	1060	468	3,409	1,879	1070	468	3,416	2	-10	0	-7	0.10%	-0.90%	0.00%	-0.20%
11-Oct	2,076	1226	508	3,810	2,066	1229	509	3,804	10	-3	-1	6	0.50%	-0.20%	-0.20%	0.20%
11-Nov	2,063	1257	517	3,837	2,062	1260	521	3,843	1	-3	-4	-6	0.00%	-0.20%	-0.80%	-0.20%
11-Dec	1,819	1193	447	3,458	1,822	1193	447		-3	0	0	-4	-0.20%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.10%
12-Jan	1,437	1093	391	2,921	1,433	1088	395	2,916	4	5	-4	5	0.30%	0.50%	-1.00%	0.20%
12-Feb	1,131	969	356	2,456	1,127	970	357	2,455	4	-1	-1	1	0.40%	-0.10%	-0.30%	0.00%
12-Mar	1,085	1038	350	2,473	1,090	1034	353	2,477	-5	4	-3	-4	-0.50%	0.40%	-0.80%	-0.20%
12-Apr	1,175	1039	374	2,589	1,184	1050	380	2,613	-9	-11	-6	-24	-0.80%	-1.00%	-1.60%	-0.90%
12-May	1,358	1089	421	2,868	1,368	1094	428	2,890	-10	-5	-7	-22	-0.70%	-0.50%	-1.60%	-0.80%
12-Jun	1,518	1119	475	3,111	1,514	1128	476	3,118	4	-9	-1	-7	0.30%	-0.80%	-0.20%	-0.20%
12-Jul	1,622	1110	498	3,230	1,622	1124	500	3,246	0	-14	-2	-16	0.00%	-1.20%	-0.40%	-0.50%
12-Aug	1,793	1117	492	3,402	1,790	1123	496	3,409	3	-6	-4	-7	0.20%	-0.50%	-0.80%	-0.20%
12-Sep	1,975	1188	511	3,674	1,969	1202	513	3,683	6	-14	-2	-9	0.30%	-1.20%	-0.40%	-0.20%
12-Oct	2,095	1283	546	3,923	2,090	1280	560	3,930	5	3	-14	-7	0.20%	0.20%	-2.50%	-0.20%
12-Nov	1,986	1273	545	3,804	1,970	1271	558	3,799	16	2	-13	5	0.80%	0.20%	-2.30%	0.10%
12-Dec	1,751	1187	493	3,431	1,732	1178	503	3,413	19	9	-10	18	1.10%	0.80%	-2.00%	0.50%
13-Jan	1,316	996	389	2,701	1,301	993	396	2,690	15	3	-7	11	1.20%	0.30%	-1.80%	0.40%
13-Feb	933	825	346	2,104	919	818	352	2,089	14	7	-6	15	1.50%	0.90%	-1.70%	0.70%

Table 2. Differences between interpolated end of month from weekly and published monthly working gas estimates, 2011-13 (cont.)

Month End	Monthly from weekly values (Bcf)				Natural gas monthly (Bcf)				Difference from natural gas monthly values(Bcf)				Percentage difference from natural Gas Monthly Values			
	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48	East Region	Producing Region	West Region	Total Lower 48
13-Mar	657	694	332	1,683	661	705	344	1,710	-4	-11	-12	-27	-0.60%	-1.60%	-3.50%	-1.60%
13-Apr	734	752	342	1,827	735	755	354	1,844	-1	-3	-12	-17	-0.10%	-0.40%	-3.40%	-0.90%
13-May	968	888	396	2,252	967	886	403	2,257	1	2	-7	-5	0.10%	0.20%	-1.70%	-0.20%
13-Jun	1,206	979	444	2,628	1,208	974	445	2,627	-2	5	-1	1	-0.20%	0.50%	-0.20%	0.00%
13-Jul	1,391	1045	477	2,914	1,393	1044	483	2,920	-2	1	-6	-6	-0.10%	0.10%	-1.20%	-0.20%
13-Aug	1,605	1087	505	3,197	1,603	1081	508	3,192	2	6	-3	5	0.10%	0.60%	-0.60%	0.20%
13-Sep	1,171	1822	533	3,526	1,173	1833	537	3,544	-2	-11	-4	-18	-0.20%	-0.60%	-0.70%	-0.50%
13-Oct	1,973	1282	555	3,809	1,976	1261	557	3,793	-3	21	-2	16	-0.20%	1.70%	-0.40%	0.40%
13-Nov	1,854	1222	526	3,602	1,847	1205	531	3,583	7	17	-5	19	0.40%	1.40%	-0.90%	0.50%
13-Dec	1,445	1037	402	2,884	1,445	1023	402	2,869	0	14	0	15	0.00%	1.40%	0.00%	0.50%

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-912, Weekly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report; Natural Gas Monthly, 2011-13

Revisions

EIA publishes revisions to the WNGSR when respondents submit revised data for the previous week, resulting in a difference of 7 Bcf or greater at the regional or national level. WNGSR's revision posting policy was announced in a November 2002 Federal Register Notice and subsequently updated in an April 2005 Federal Register notice.⁶ All respondents' changes are entered into EIA's database for editing, imputation, and other analytic purposes, but the changes only lead to a published revision when they affect working gas storage levels by a net total of at least 7 Bcf at either a regional or national level. Once the 7 Bcf revision publication threshold is met in any region, then all resubmissions of data during the report week are reported, regardless of size. Consequently, published revisions on the national level may net less than 7 Bcf, as a result of offsetting revisions in another region.

Table 3. Published Revisions to the Weekly Natural Gas Storage Report, 2011-13

Publication date of revision	Affected reporting period	Regions affected/ amount of revision (Bcf)	Total reported revision (Bcf)	Percent difference from original publication working gas estimate
11/18/2011	11/11/2011	East (-3), Producing (-4)	-7	-0.20%
4/20/2012	3/23/2012	East (-1), Producing (-6)	-7	-0.30%
4/20/2012	3/30/2012	East (-1), Producing (-6)	-7	-0.30%
4/20/2012	4/6/2012	East (-2), Producing (-9)	-11	-0.40%
4/20/2012	4/13/2012	East (-2), Producing (-9)	-11	-0.40%

Note: The published revision on 4/20/2012 of -11 Bcf was greater than the out-of-cycle release threshold of 10 Bcf but was released on a regular report day because the magnitude of the revision was not confirmed until the regular release date.

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-912, Weekly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report, 2013

From 2011 to 2013, EIA revised published working gas stock data for five report periods as a result of resubmissions of data. These revisions were reported to the public on two separate publication dates as noted in Table 3. The revised estimates of working gas stocks differed by less than 1% of the original published estimates.

According to EIA published policies, EIA must issue an unscheduled release of revisions to the weekly estimates when the cumulative effect of data changes is 10 Bcf or higher for the current or prior week's report. At 1:00 p.m. EST the public is notified of an impending release, and the revised report is disseminated on a federal workday at 2:00 p.m. ET. EIA has never issued an out-of-cycle revision.

EIA also occasionally receives small revisions that do not meet the publication threshold. These revisions are entered into the EIA-912 data warehouse for analytical and record-keeping purposes, but they are not reflected in published weekly data. Between 2011 and 2013⁷ EIA received 75 such revisions, with an absolute average of 1,452 million cubic feet (MMcf). EIA received 59 unpublished revisions between 0 and 1,999 MMcf, 7 between 2 and 3,999 MMcf, and 9 between 4 and 6,999 MMcf.

Range (MMcf)	Count	Absolute average (MMcf)
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⁶ *Federal Register*, Vol. 67, No. 218, U.S. Energy Information Administration (November 12, 2002), pp. 68581-83, (<http://www.eia.gov/survey/frn/naturalgas/WNGSR-Revision-Policy-Nov12-2002.pdf>); and *Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 79, U.S. Energy Information Administration (April 26, 2005), pp 21406-08, <http://www.eia.gov/survey/frn/naturalgas/WNGSR-Unscheduled-Release-Policy-Final-April2005.pdf>.

⁷ The WNGSR system did not have a mechanism for storing unpublished revisions until July 2011. Any unpublished revisions from January – July 2011 are not reflected in the counts above.

0-1,999	59	584
2,000 - 3,999	9	3,002
4,000 - 6,999	8	5,308

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-912, Weekly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report, 2011-13

Response rates

EIA-912 response rates, measured as a percentage of the total number of sampled companies, never fell below 90% for any week, and exceeded 98% for the majority of weeks between 2011 and 2013. (Table 4). EIA has never needed to publish a revision to WNGSR as a result of nonresponse.

Table 4. Response rates for the Form EIA-912 Survey, 2011-13

Response rate (Percentage of total number of sample companies)	Frequency count
0 - 89%	0
90 - 93%	1
94 - 97%	20
98 - 100%	135

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-912, Weekly Underground Natural Gas Storage Report, 2011-13

II. Accuracy, completeness, and accessibility of documentation

The methodological documentation for the WNGSR is available on the EIA website.⁸ This document contains information about the WNGSR's processing, sampling, estimation, imputation for nonresponse, computation of summary statistics, and derivation of historical estimates that predate the collection of the Form EIA-912.

III. Protection of market sensitive information

The EIA-912 system is located at the Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20585. To gain access to the Forrestal Building, one must have a DOE employee badge or must receive a visitor's badge from the DOE security office. DOE security controls access to and from the Forrestal Building.

⁸ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Methodology*, November 25, 2008, <http://ir.eia.gov/ngs/methodology.html>.

The EIA-912 processing and estimation occur in a dedicated secure room in the Forrestal Building. The processing system resides in the secure room only accessible to designated EIA employees and contractors who work on the WNGSR team. EIA is reviewing ways to upgrade the WNGSR security and processing environment to better leverage technologies that have been developed since the inception of the WNGSR. For instance, a secure web-based portal for submission of the data, as well as processing system controls that can better track specific activities performed by WNGSR personnel, are under development. The current WNGSR processing system is not connected to any other system, or to the Internet. All removable system components (hard drives and laptops), media (diskettes and CDs), and printed documents are stored when not in use in a GSA-approved safe, located within the dedicated room.

Authorized staff members hold an estimation and data validation meeting with recorded attendance in the secure room, typically the day before the scheduled release. WNGSR staff review submitted data and other validating information and then run the software to generate the final report. The final report is verified by multiple staff and once again before it is delivered for posting on the day of release.

Use of storage estimates prior to official release

The WNGSR is released each Thursday at 10:30 a.m. ET, with exceptions for federal holidays or other preapproved purposes. Specific release times and dates for each calendar year are published in advance, and have consistently been met. EIA has never had an unauthorized release of the WNGSR data prior to the scheduled release time.

Access to the estimates prior to release of the WNGSR is limited to project managers and analysts who work on the WNGSR project team, and is only made available to employees outside of the WNGSR project team with the approval of the survey manager and as specified by OMB in their Statistical Policy Directive: *Compilation, Release, and Evaluation of Principal Federal Economic Indicators*.⁹

Beginning with data submitted for the first report period after April 1, 2004, the information related to Form EIA-912 has been used for statistical purposes only, in accordance with the *Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002* (Title 5 of Public Law 107-347) and other applicable federal laws. No other use of the estimates has established approval. Any other use is strictly prohibited. Data are not disclosed in identifiable form without the respondent's consent. By law, every EIA employee, as well as every agent, is subject to a jail term, a fine, or both if they make public any identifiable information reported through the EIA-912.

⁹ Office of Management and Budget, *Statistical Policy Directive on Compilation, Release, and Evaluation of Principal Federal Economic Indicators*, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/inforeg/statpolicy/dir_3_fr_09251985.pdf

Timing of data release

As mentioned above, WNGSR data are released at 10:30 a.m. ET each Thursday, with the exception of federal holidays or with the exception of certain extenuating circumstances, such as extreme weather or inability to access the building. During the period covering 2011-13, the WNGSR was rescheduled once. The October 17, 2013, release of the WNGSR was postponed to Tuesday, October 22, 2013, following a government shutdown. The following WNGSR release scheduled for October 24, 2013, occurred on the regular schedule.

IV. Public engagement and enhancement of the weekly report

To meet ongoing customer needs, EIA staff has met with groups of industry analysts who closely follow WNGSR releases on three different occasions over the past three years. The meetings were attended by industry participants, including both WNGSR users and current WNGSR respondents and trade associations. These were occasions to explain the application of EIA's methodology in further detail to stakeholders, to discuss perceived shortcomings of the data, and to receive suggestions for possible enhancements to the product.

Partly because of the feedback received during the first meeting, and following system testing and extensive internal discussion, EIA began publishing a breakout of working gas volumes in salt and nonsalt facilities in the Producing Region. This breakout allowed analysts to examine the contribution of salt facilities to regional movements, which can be difficult to model because of the unusually high withdrawal capabilities of salt domes. EIA now publishes this salt/nonsalt breakout on a weekly basis, and has made available a history of this series going back to 2007.

In addition to the salt/nonsalt breakout in the Producing Region data, the WNGSR report underwent two minor enhancements to improve the information indicating changes in storage flows and to better accommodate users utilizing automatic retrieval systems. The first change was the addition of an implied flow variable calculating week-on-week stock changes. The second was the addition of a flag indicating changes to working gas levels resulting from a reclassification of gas. The implied flow metric, in conjunction with the reclassification flag, allows users to see net volumes of natural gas withdrawn from or added to storage excluding reclassifications totaling at least 7 Bcf. Data users are now better able to differentiate between true volumetric storage flows and apparent flows that result from accounting or engineering reassessments made by storage operators. However, as mentioned earlier, EIA is proposing to begin formal collection of any inventory adjustments and publication of revisions and reclassifications totaling at least 4 Bcf in 2015 in upcoming ICR 1905-1975. Pending clearance of the lower threshold for reporting revisions and reclassifications, weekly market movements could be derived with further precision each week and would not be as vulnerable to inventory adjustments which obscure the true weekly inventory changes in natural gas storage.