# Washington State Drinking Water Fluoridation

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## Introduction

This exploratory data analysis tutorial explores the use of publicly available data to investigate drinking water system fluoride levels in Washington State. Methods for reproducible data cleanup and exploratory analysis using R, RMarkdown, and knitr, will be demonstrated, as well as some of the plotting capabilities of R, especially ggplot2.

We will compare the various water systems in Washington State relative to the state and federal recommendations for optimum levels of fluoride concentation in drinking water.

According to the US CDC, lower levels of fluoride help prevent tooth decay, but higher levels increase the risk of dental fluorosis.

In April 2015, the US HHS ("Health Department") released a lowering of the recommended fluoride concentration in drinking water from the previous range of 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L to the new level of 0.7 mg/L, which falls below Washington State's DOH "optimal" range of 0.8 to 1.3 mg/L.

If Washington State follows this new recommendation, what changes would need to be made to the state's drinking water systems?

#### **Data Sources**

Data files have been prepared using a companion Markdown script to generate text data files. These data and Markdown files are hosted in the wa-water-quality repository on GitHub. (https://github.com/brianhigh/wa-water-quality)

The water system data come from WA DOH Water System Data (2015) and WA DOH Fluoride in Drinking Water (2013). The lat/long coordinates were generated using the ggmap package for R. The federally recommended fluoride levels come from the US HHS ("Health Department") and US EPA.

## Setup

Load the required R packages.

```
for (pkg in c("knitr", "dplyr", "lattice", "ggplot2", "sqldf", "gridExtra", "maps")) {
   if (! suppressWarnings(require(pkg, character.only=TRUE)) ) {
      install.packages(pkg, repos="http://cran.fhcrc.org", dependencies=TRUE)
      if (! suppressWarnings(require(pkg, character.only=TRUE)) ) {
        stop(paste0(c("Can't load package: ", pkg, "!"), collapse = ""))
      }
   }
}
```

Configure knitr options.

```
opts_chunk$set(tidy=FALSE, cache=FALSE)
```

Create the data folder, if necessary.

```
datadir <- "data"
dir.create(file.path(datadir), showWarnings=FALSE, recursive=TRUE)</pre>
```

Read in the location coordinates from a text file if you have saved one previously.

```
tsv_import <- function(filename) {
    infile <- paste(c(datadir, '/', filename), sep='', collapse='')
    if (file.exists(infile)) {
        read.delim(infile, stringsAsFactors=FALSE, header=TRUE)
    }
    else {
        stop(paste("Can't find", filename, "in folder", datadir, "!", sep=" "))
    }
}
locations <- tsv_import('wa_doh_dw_locations.tsv')
systems <- tsv_import('wa_doh_dw_systems.tsv')
sources <- tsv_import('wa_doh_dw_sources.tsv')

## Warning in scan(file, what, nmax, sep, dec, quote, skip, nlines,
## na.strings, : EOF within quoted string

fluoride <- tsv_import('wa_doh_dw_fluoride.tsv')</pre>
```

# Join Tables

Join the location and water system data into a new table for use in plotting.

# **Exploratory Data Analysis**

We'll look at Washington State Drinking Water Systems with natural (non-fluoridated) fluoride levels (concentration in mg/L) using plots and summary tables.

## **Scatter Plots**

Let's get a first look at the data with some scatter plots. This pairs plot of fluoride levels (mg/L), residential population (ResPop), and system owner type descriptions (OwnerTypeDesc) shows some potentially interesting relationships.

```
pairs(nat.fl[4:6], panel = panel.smooth)
```

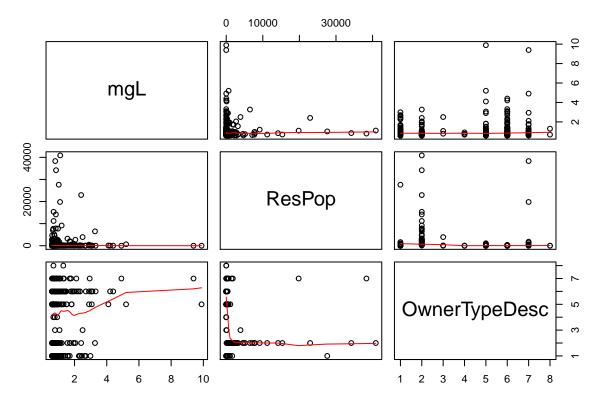


Figure 1: Washington State Untreated Drinking Water Systems Pairs Plot

To spead out the lower values, use a log scale.

```
pairs(nat.fl[4:6], panel = panel.smooth, log="xy")
```

It appears that the untreated water systems serving larger residential populations might have lower natural fluoride levels. Let's look at that a little closer. We'll use qplot, which is the simpler interface to the ggplot2 package.

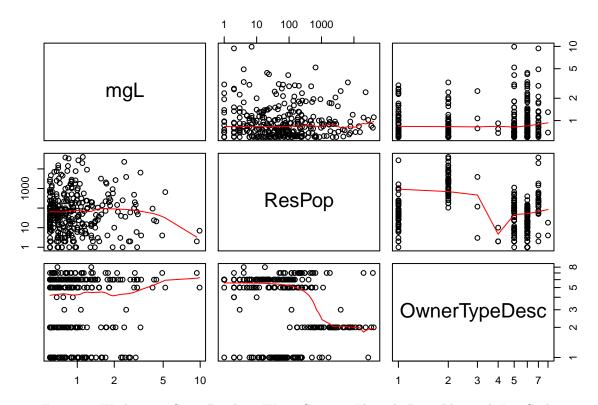


Figure 2: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Fluoride Pairs Plot with Log Scale

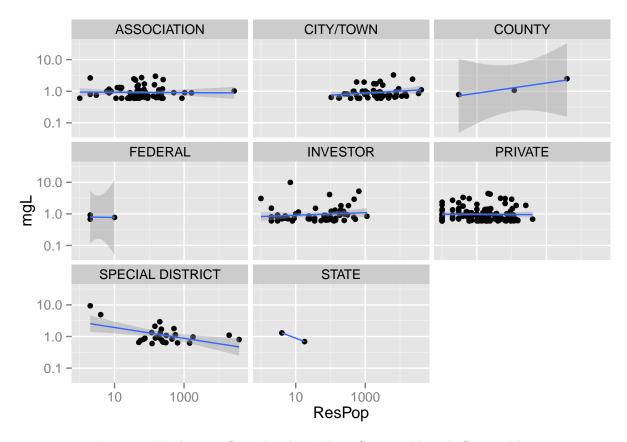


Figure 3: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Fluoride Scatter Plot

## Special District Water Systems

Let's zoom in on "special district" water systems with qplot.

```
# Take the log10() of the variables of interest
nat.fl$LmgL <- log10(nat.fl$mgL)
nat.fl$LResPop <- log10(nat.fl$ResPop)

# Filter by "special district" water system owner type
nat.fl.special <- filter(nat.fl, OwnerTypeDesc=="SPECIAL DISTRICT")

# Plot points with a linear regression line
qplot(LResPop, LmgL, data=nat.fl.special, geom=c("point", "smooth"), method="lm")</pre>
```

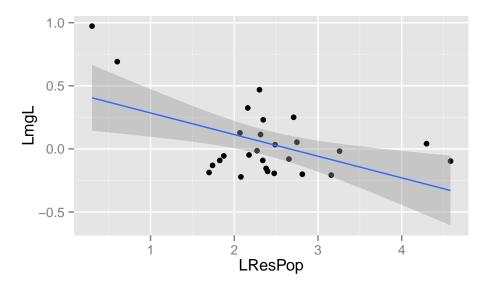


Figure 4: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Fluoride Scatter Plot of Special Districts with qplot

Incidentally, we can make this same plot with ggplot, the more advanced interface to the ggplot2 package.

```
ggplot(nat.fl.special, aes(LResPop, LmgL)) + geom_point() + geom_smooth(method="lm")
```

Let's take a look at those top-2 highest-fluoride "special district" water systems.

```
nat.fl.special %>% select(SystemName, mgL, ResPop) %>% arrange(desc(mgL)) %>% head(2)
```

```
## SystemName mgL ResPop
## 1 PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 9.39 2
## 2 DODD ROAD INDUSTRIAL PARK WATER 4.91 4
```

So, the two "special district" water systems with the highest fluoride concentrations serve just a few residential users. What other systems have high natural fluoride? How high is "too high"?

### Untreated Fluoride Levels over EPA MCL

The US EPA's MCLG (maximum contaminant level goal) of 4 mg/L. This is also the level of the EPA's enforceable MCL (maximum contaminant level).

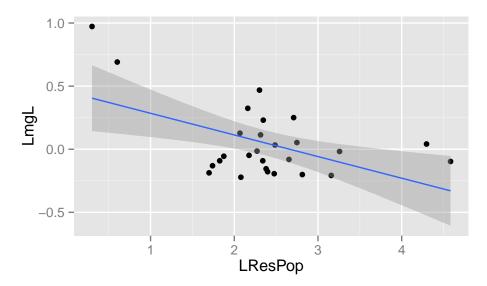


Figure 5: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Fluoride Scatter Plot of Special Districts with ggplot

Which systems are over the EPA MCL of 4 mg/L?

##		SystemName Own	nerTypeDesc	ResPop	${\tt mgL}$
##	6	WESTBOURNE ACRES	INVESTOR	94	4.10
##	1	FROSTY PINES	PRIVATE	24	4.21
##	7	DALLES WATER ASSOCIATION	PRIVATE	21	4.40
##	4	DODD ROAD INDUSTRIAL PARK WATER SPECIA	AL DISTRICT	4	4.91
##	5	HARRISON-RAY-BURBANK WATER SYSTEM	INVESTOR	656	5.20
##	2	PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SPECIA	AL DISTRICT	2	9.39
##	3	LONG LAKE OPERATORS VILLAGE	INVESTOR	7	9.89

Let's plot the water systems with fluoride levels over the EPA MCL as a simple bar plot with ggplot, using the theme\_light theme, coloring by system owner type, and flipping the coordinates to accommodate the long water system names.

One of the highest levels (9.39 mg/L) is at Paterson Elementary School. That's over twice the EPA's regulatory limit of 4 mg/L. Looking at the ResPop column, the table lists the population as 2, yet the school's population of students is over 100 according to Washington OSPI. What are the school's water sources?

# Washington State Drinking Water Systems Exceeding EPA MCL of 4 mg/L

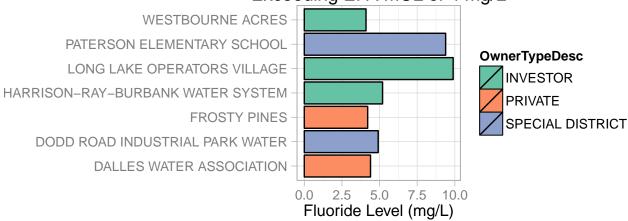


Figure 6: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Exceeding EPA Fluoride MCL of 4 mg/L

It looks like there is no treatment information available about those two wells.

# **SQL** Queries

We can also use the SQL language to query our dataframes with sqldf. Here is how to repeat the previous operation with SQL.

```
sqldf('select SystemName, Src_Name, TrObjective, TrProcss from sources
    where SystemName = "PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL"')

## Loading required package: tcltk

## SystemName Src_Name TrObjective TrProcss
## 1 PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WELL #1

## 2 PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WELL #2
```

Here's a list of the known water source types feeding the water systems with fluoride levels over over 4 mg/L.

```
sqldf('select distinct sources.SystemName, sources.SourceType
    from sources inner join fluoride using(PWSID) where fluoride.mgL > 4')
```

```
## SystemName SourceType ## 1 LONG LAKE OPERATORS VILLAGE GROUNDWATER
```

```
## 2 LONG LAKE OPERATORS VILLAGE WELL
## 3 PATERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WELL
## 4 HARRISON-RAY-BURBANK WATER SYSTEM INTERTIE - TREATED
## 5 HARRISON-RAY-BURBANK WATER SYSTEM WELL
## 6 TUCANNON GUARD STATION WELL
## 7 WESTBOURNE ACRES WELL
```

Now we'll count the number of water sources by source type and owner type of all of the water systems.

##		${\tt OwnerTypeDesc}$	$\verb"cntOwnerTypeDesc"$
##	1	COUNTY	179
##	2	FEDERAL	363
##	3	STATE	397
##	4	SPECIAL DISTRICT	1338
##	5	CITY/TOWN	1489
##	6	ASSOCIATION	1867
##	7	INVESTOR	3719
##	8	PRIVATE	5398

Now we can plot these as a stacked bar plot.

### Statistical Tests

**Test for Normality** Check the normality of the fluoride and population variables for the "special district" water system with Q-Q plots.

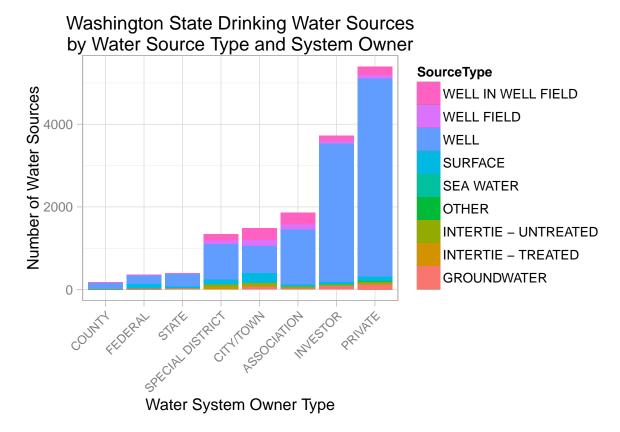


Figure 7: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Source Type Stacked Bar Plot with ggplot

Significance Test for Linear Regression Print out the F-statistics of the significance test with the summary function.

```
summary(lm(mgL~ResPop+OwnerTypeDesc, data=nat.fl))

##
## Call:
## lm(formula = mgL ~ ResPop + OwnerTypeDesc, data = nat.fl)
##
## Residuals:
```

# Normal Q-Q Plots of Fluoride Level and Residential Population for Special District Water Systems

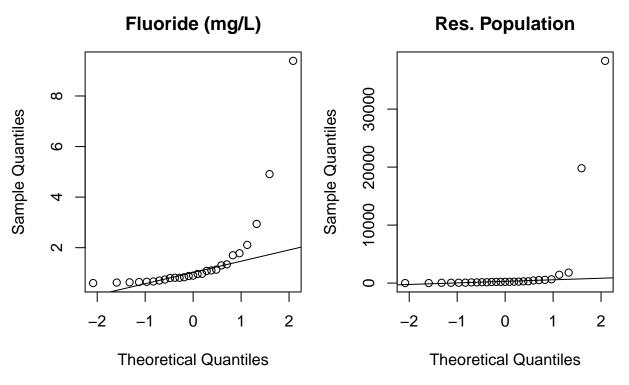


Figure 8: Washington State Drinking Water Systems Special Districts Q-Q Plot

```
##
                10 Median
                                3Q
       Min
                                       Max
  -0.9206 -0.4278 -0.2894
                           0.0380
                                    8.6689
##
##
## Coefficients:
##
                                   Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
## (Intercept)
                                                         8.312 3.03e-15 ***
                                  1.028e+00
                                             1.237e-01
## ResPop
                                 -1.250e-06
                                             1.311e-05
                                                        -0.095
                                                                  0.9241
## OwnerTypeDescCITY/TOWN
                                 -1.749e-02
                                             1.964e-01
                                                        -0.089
                                                                  0.9291
## OwnerTypeDescCOUNTY
                                  4.252e-01
                                             5.835e-01
                                                          0.729
                                                                  0.4667
## OwnerTypeDescFEDERAL
                                 -2.378e-01
                                             5.834e-01
                                                        -0.408
                                                                  0.6838
## OwnerTypeDescINVESTOR
                                  1.933e-01
                                             1.791e-01
                                                          1.079
                                                                  0.2815
## OwnerTypeDescPRIVATE
                                                                  0.5820
                                  8.535e-02
                                             1.549e-01
                                                          0.551
## OwnerTypeDescSPECIAL DISTRICT 4.929e-01
                                             2.280e-01
                                                          2.162
                                                                  0.0314 *
## OwnerTypeDescSTATE
                                 -3.283e-02
                                             7.092e-01
                                                        -0.046
                                                                  0.9631
##
## Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1
##
## Residual standard error: 0.9876 on 309 degrees of freedom
## Multiple R-squared: 0.02182,
                                    Adjusted R-squared:
                                                          -0.003504
## F-statistic: 0.8616 on 8 and 309 DF, p-value: 0.5493
```

#### **Box Plots**

Here is a basic boxplot of the fluoride level (concentration in mg/L) by water system owner type description (OwnerTypeDesc).

```
# Make a basic boxplot of mgL by Water System Owner Type
par(cex.axis=.55)
boxplot(mgL~OwnerTypeDesc, data=nat.fl)
```

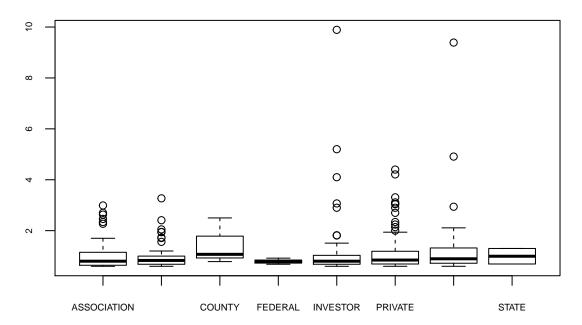


Figure 9: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

As there is a lot of spread at the higher fluoride levels, we'll try again using a log scale for the y-axis.

```
# Make a basic boxplot of mgL by Water System Owner Type
par(cex.axis=.55)
boxplot(LmgL~OwnerTypeDesc, data=nat.fl)
```

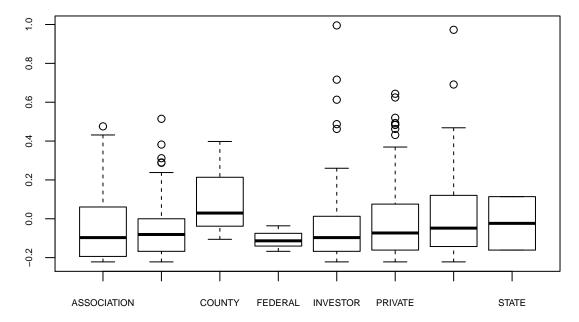


Figure 10: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

As an alternative to the standard "base" plotting in R, we can use the lattice plotting system. Here is a boxplot faceted by residental population groups served by the water systems.

Next, let's swap the axes and try a different layout. We'll also use the with function so we don't have to keep repeating the name of the data.frame when we refer to column names.

One of the most popular plotting systems in R is the versatile ggplot2 package, which we used earlier with scatter and bar plots. The rest of the plots in this document will be created with ggplot.

Here is a faceted plot like the previous one (2x2), without the coordinate swap, and this time made using the ggplot function.

# Fluoride Level by Water System Owner Type and Population

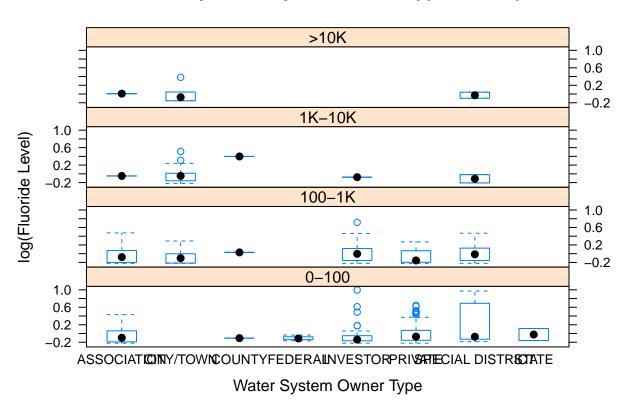


Figure 11: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type Lattice Box Plot

# Fluoride Level by Water System Owner Type and Population

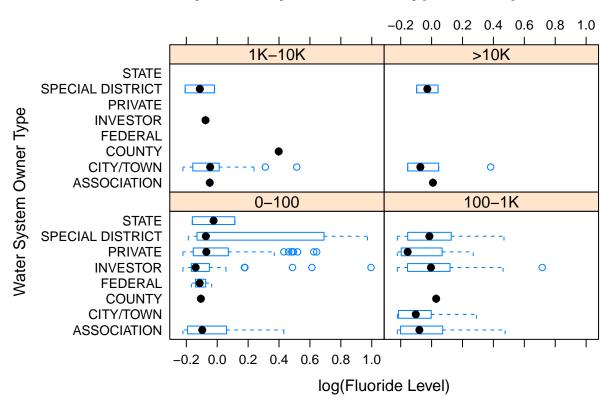


Figure 12: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type Lattice Box Plot

```
x="Water System Owner Type", y = "log(Fluoride Level)") +
    theme_light() +
theme(axis.text.x = element_text(size=8, angle=45, hjust=1, vjust=1)) +
geom_boxplot(outlier.size=1)
```

# Natural Fluoride Levels in Washington Water Sources by Water System Owner Type

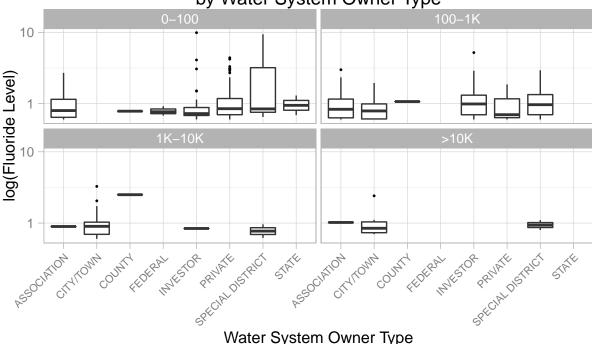


Figure 13: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type faceted Box Plot with ggplot

Let's start over again with the basic boxplot. We will store the essential parameters of this next plot to build upon later as we add more features to the plot. For the sake of tidiness, order the boxplots by increasing median levels.

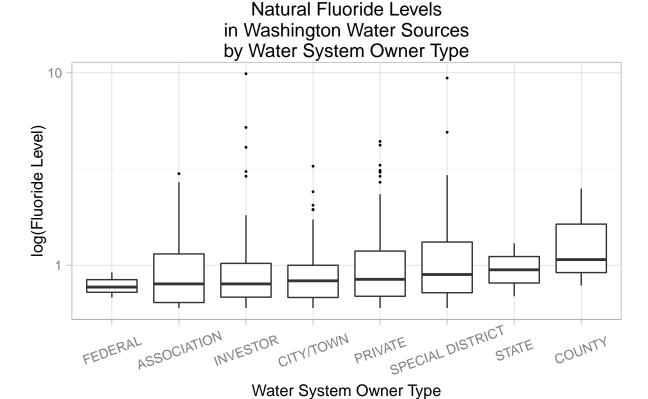


Figure 14: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type Basic Box Plot with ggplot

We can use color instead of faceting to represent the population groups.

We'll also add data points with jitter and remove the (now redundant) black outlier dots.

Add a light-green horizontal band to show the optimal fluoride level range and add a label for it.

Add lines (and labels) for the various US HHS and EPA levels.

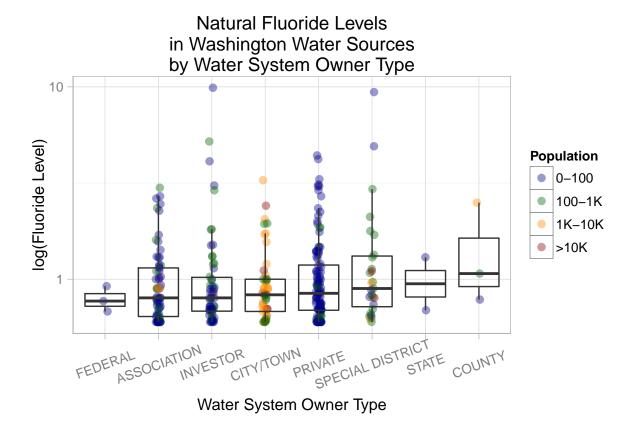


Figure 15: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

```
# Add lines (and labels) for the various US HHS and EPA levels
plot <- plot + geom_hline(aes(yintercept=0.7, alpha=.5), color="darkgreen") +
    annotate("text", x=.66, y=.6, label="HHS 2015", size=4, color="darkgreen") +
    geom_hline(aes(yintercept=2, alpha=.5), color = "darkorange") +
    annotate("text", x=.73, y=1.8, label="EPA SMCL", size=4, color="darkorange") +
    geom_hline(aes(yintercept=4, alpha=.5), color = "darkred") +
    annotate("text", x=.65, y=3.6, label="EPA MCL", size=4, color="darkred")
plot + geom_boxplot(alpha=0, outlier.size=0)</pre>
```

#### Violin Plot of Natural Fluoride Levels

Make a violin plot of fluoride levels by system owner type. A violin plot is something like a box plot, except the width of the "violin" shape varies with the density of observations at each point along the y-axis. This will help us see density differences where the dots overlap.

```
# Make the violin plot
plot + geom_violin(alpha=0)
```

The colors indicate the size of the population served by the water system. The width of the shapes vary according to the density of points plotted at a given fluoride level.

The light green band shows Washington's range of "optimal" fluoride levels (0.8 to 1.3 mg/L). The green line marks the new (April, 2015) US HHS recommended level of 0.7 mg/L.

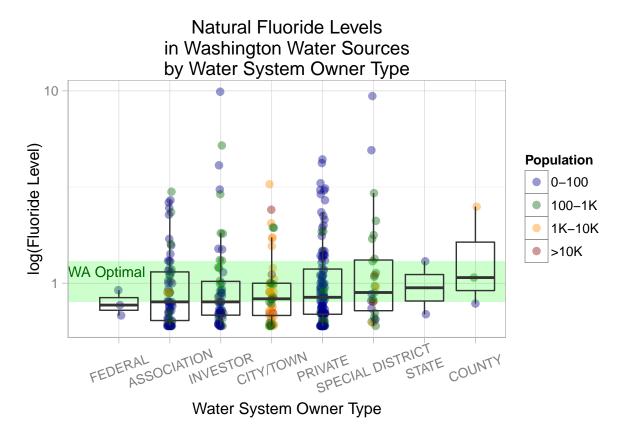


Figure 16: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

The red line marks the level of the US EPA's MCLG (maximum contaminant level goal) of 4 mg/L. This is also the level of the EPA's enforceable MCL (maximum contaminant level). The orange line marks the level of the US EPA's SMCL (secondary standard) of 2 mg/L, a non-enforceable guideline.

For completeness, we'll add a footnote referencing the data sources.

# **Mapping**

## Prepare Map Data

Before we plot the water systems on a map, we will need to get a state map with county names and boundaries. Prepare the map data.frame using the map\_data function from the ggplot2 package.

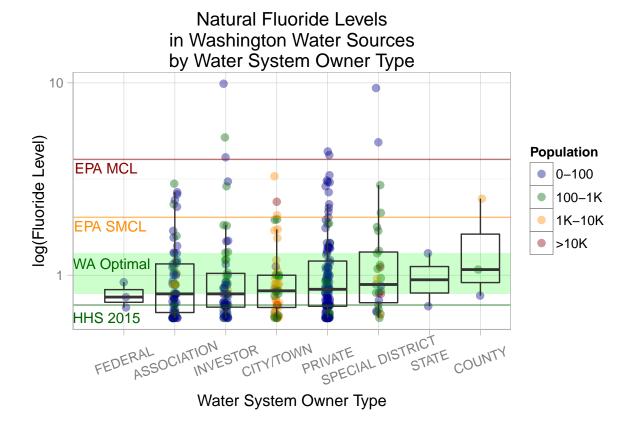


Figure 17: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

```
# Capitalize first letter of word - for use with proper nouns
# From documentation for `tolower` in package _base_ 3.1.3
capwords <- function(s, strict = FALSE) {</pre>
    cap <- function(s) paste(toupper(substring(s, 1, 1)),</pre>
                   {s <- substring(s, 2); if(strict) tolower(s) else s},
                               sep = "", collapse = " " )
    sapply(strsplit(s, split = " "), cap, USE.NAMES = !is.null(names(s)))
}
# Mappings of counties by state
county_df <- map_data('county')</pre>
# Subset just for WA
wa <- subset(county_df, region=="washington")</pre>
wa$subregion <- sapply(wa$subregion, function(x) capwords(x))</pre>
wa$county <- wa$subregion</pre>
cnames <- aggregate(cbind(long, lat) ~ subregion, data=wa,</pre>
                     FUN=function(x)mean(range(x)))
write.csv(cnames, file='data/cnames.csv', row.names=FALSE)
```

This allows us to create a base state map with county border in grey that we will build upon later. We'll use the theme\_classic() theme.

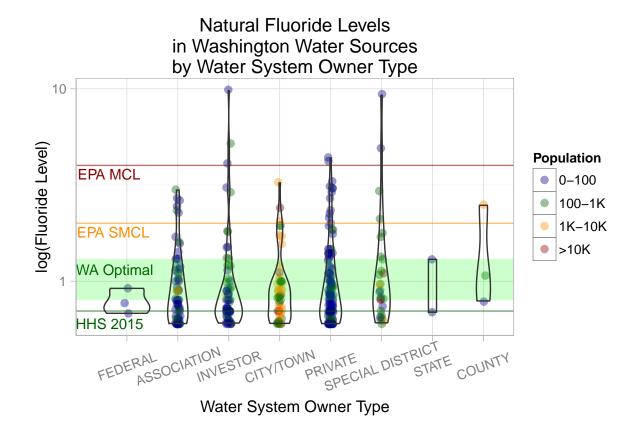


Figure 18: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

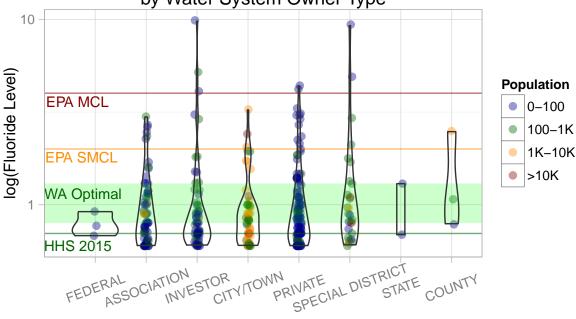
```
# Create the base state map with counties outlined in grey
wamap <- ggplot(wa, aes(long, lat)) +
    geom_polygon(aes(group=group), color='darkgrey', fill=NA) +
    geom_text(data=cnames, aes(long, lat, label = subregion), size=3) +
    theme_classic() +
    theme(axis.line=element_blank(),
        axis.text.x=element_blank(),
        axis.text.y=element_blank(),
        axis.ticks=element_blank(),
        axis.title.x=element_blank(),
        axis.title.y=element_blank())</pre>
```

# Untreated Systems Exceeding Optimal Fluoride Levels

Make a map of populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with natural fluoride levels above Washington State's "optimal" range of 0.8 - 1.3 mg/L.

```
# Subset the data
nat.fl.high <- nat.fl[nat.fl$mgL>1.3,]
nat.fl.high <- nat.fl.high[complete.cases(nat.fl.high),]
# Make the map</pre>
```

# Natural Fluoride Levels in Washington Water Sources by Water System Owner Type



Data sources: WA DOH (www.doh.wa.gov), US EPA (water.epa.gov) and HHS (www.hhs.gov)

Figure 19: Washington State Drinking Water Systems by Owner Type

Water System Owner Type



Figure 20: Washington State Counties

# Washington Populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with Natural (Untreated) Fluoride Levels Above Washington State's "Optimal" Range (0.8 – 1.3 mg/L)

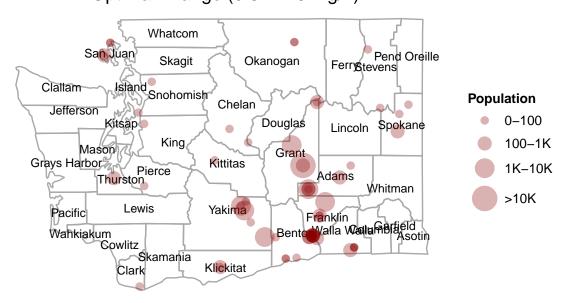


Figure 21: Washington State Natural Fluoride Levels Over Optimal Range

#### Untreated Natural Fluoride Levels

Make a map of populations served by non-fluoridated water systems with natural fluoride levels.

# Washington Populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with Natural (Untreated) Fluoride Levels Colored Relative to Washington State's "Optimal" Range (0.8 – 1.3 mg/L)

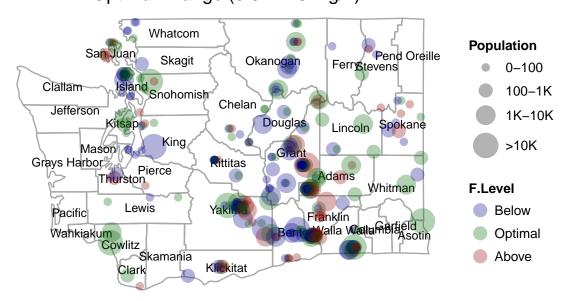


Figure 22: Washington State Untreated Fluoride Water Systems

# All Systems: Optimal and Nonoptimal Fluoride Levels

Make a map of populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with natural or treated fluoride levels falling inside or outside of Washington State's "optimal" range of 0.8 - 1.3 mg/L.

```
# Assign Optimal as T/F based on fluoride concentrations (mqL) and system type
fl$Optimal <- with(fl, Treatment=="TREATED" | Treatment=="INTERTIED" | F.Level=="Optimal")
# Convert T/F to Yes/No
fl$Optimal <- factor(c('No', 'Yes')[fl$Optimal + 1])</pre>
# Subset the columns we want and remove incomplete observations
fl.opt <- select(fl, County, PWSID, SystemName, ResPop, OwnerTypeDesc,</pre>
                 lon, lat, Treatment, Population, Optimal)
fl.opt <- fl[complete.cases(fl.opt),]</pre>
# Make the map
wamap + geom point(data=fl.opt, inherit.aes=F,
               aes(x=lon, y=lat, size=Population, color=Optimal), alpha=.3) +
    scale_size_manual(values = seq(3, 12, by=2)) +
    scale_color_manual(values=c("darkred", "darkgreen")) +
    guides(colour = guide_legend(override.aes = list(size=5))) +
    ggtitle(label = paste("Washington Populations Served by Drinking Water Systems",
                           "with Fluoride Levels Colored Relative to Washington State's",
                          "\"Optimal\" Range (0.8 - 1.3 mg/L)", sep="\n"))
```

# Washington Populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with Fluoride Levels Colored Relative to Washington State's "Optimal" Range (0.8 – 1.3 mg/L)

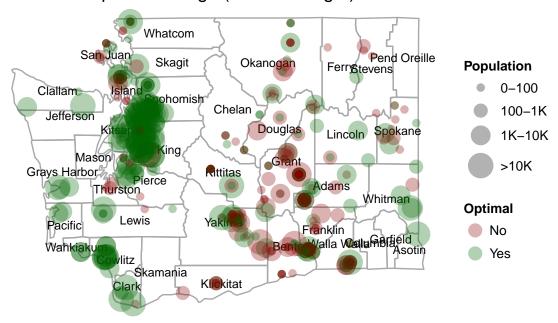


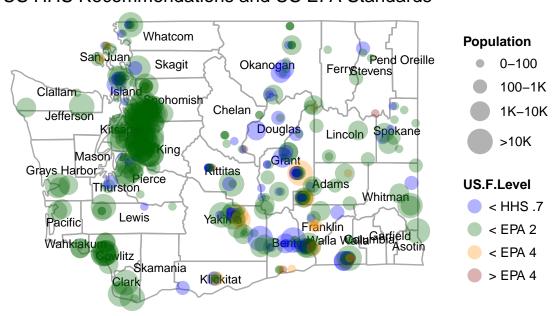
Figure 23: Washington State Optimal and Nonoptimal Fluoride Levels

# All Systems: US Recommended Fluoride Levels

Make a map of populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with natural or treated fluoride levels relative to US HHS ("Health Department") and US EPA guidelines.

```
# Assign US.F.Level based on fluoride concentrations (mqL)
fl$US.F.Level <- cut(fl$mgL, c(-Inf, 0, .7, 2, 4, Inf),
            labels=c("Unknown", "< HHS .7", "< EPA 2", "< EPA 4", "> EPA 4"))
# Assign remaining US.F.Levels for water systems without concentrations (mgL)
fl$US.F.Level[with(fl, Treatment=="TREATED" | Treatment=="INTERTIED")] <- "< EPA 2"
fl$US.F.Level[with(fl, Treatment=="MIXED")] <- "Unknown"</pre>
# Subset the columns we want and remove incomplete observations
fl.us <- select(fl, County, PWSID, SystemName, ResPop, OwnerTypeDesc,
                 lon, lat, Treatment, Population, US.F.Level)
fl.us <- fl[complete.cases(fl.us),] # This removes the "Unknown" group
# Make the map
wamap <- wamap + geom_point(data=fl.us, inherit.aes=FALSE,</pre>
                aes(x=lon, y=lat, group=US.F.Level, color=US.F.Level,
                    size=Population, fill=US.F.Level),
                position=position_jitterdodge(jitter.width=0.1, dodge.width=0.1),
        alpha=.3) + scale_shape_discrete(solid=TRUE) +
    scale_size_manual(values = seq(3, 12, by=2)) +
    scale_color_manual(values=c("blue", "darkgreen", "darkorange", "darkred")) +
    guides(colour = guide_legend(override.aes = list(size=5))) +
```

# Washington Populations Served by Drinking Water Systems with Fluoride Levels Colored Relative to US HHS Recommendations and US EPA Standards



Data sources: WA DOH (www.doh.wa.gov), US EPA (water.epa.gov) and HHS (www.hhs.gov)

Figure 24: Washington State Fluoride Levels Colored Relative to US Recommendations and Regulations