

Volunteer Monitoring

The National Facilitation of CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Efforts Project coordinates and disseminates information about the Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network.

Situation: Volunteer water quality monitoring programs often serve as the critical first link that engages the public in watershed stewardship. Volunteer monitoring programs improve the understanding of local water resources, encourage individual and community involvement in water quality protection and restoration efforts, and help communities make informed decisions that improve water quality.

The National Facilitation of CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Efforts Project coordinates and disseminates relevant information within and about the Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network. This network is currently composed of 38 Extension-associated monitoring programs in 29 states and territories. It represents a powerful constituency of more than 8,500 trained citizen scientists actively engaged in grassroots stewardship efforts.

Actions:

This National Facilitation Project was undertaken to construct a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts nationally. We have:

- Located 38 Extension-based and Extension-associated volunteer monitoring programs.
- Queried these programs and summarized the findings on their strengths, weaknesses, successes, and challenges.
- Established a mechanism of communication among with these programs via a listserv, CSREESVolMon@lists.uwex.edu.
- Created, launched, expanded, and frequently updated our website

www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer. The website contains all the outputs of this project.

- Researched, developed, and produced modules for the “Guide to Growing CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Programs”, both in print and on the website, including many active links. This guide approaches one-stop shopping for program coordinators who are truly interested in growing their programs.
- At the invitation of regional coordinators, we developed curricula and conducted volunteer monitoring training workshops to meet the particular needs of three regions.
- Developed and used a Wisconsin on-line database for volunteer monitoring data.

Impact - Outcomes:

- Assumed leadership role as a national service provider for volunteer water quality monitoring,
- Enhanced communication among existing Extension volunteer monitoring programs nationwide,
- Reduced the effort needed to start new volunteer monitoring programs or to expand existing programs,
- Lent support and credibility to previously isolated programs,
- Facilitated local data sharing and internet learning,
- Expanded volunteer opportunities due to enhanced local and state capacity for Extension volunteer monitoring programs,



- Strengthened strategic partnerships within the Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network and between CSREES and other agencies, and
- Enhanced recognition of CSREES volunteer monitoring efforts as a viable component of the water monitoring community.

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