

# Effectively Working with Volunteer Monitors

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## ABSTRACT

Extension volunteer monitoring programs actively engage the public in watershed protection and enhancement. They increase local involvement in activities that create measurable improvements in local water quality. They strengthen Extension's capacity to deliver timely programs at many levels. The goal of the Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Facilitation Project is to build a comprehensive support system for Extension-associated volunteer water quality monitoring efforts across the country. We are working to expand and strengthen the capacity of existing programs and support new program development. The primary objectives of this project include identifying, learning about, and featuring current Extension monitoring programs, developing training materials to support and strengthen these efforts, providing training at regional CSREES water quality conferences, developing internet and web-based tools for networking and data management, and working to increase collaboration and cooperation between Extension programs and other agency programs.

To date, we identified 36 Extension-associated programs. We developed and launched a web site ([www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer](http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer)) that lists all programs, highlights individual programs, includes related research and educational efforts, and displays modules of the *Guide for Growing CSREES Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs*.

## Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring National Facilitation Project GOALS

- Build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts in the U.S.
- Expand and strengthen the capacity of existing Extension volunteer monitoring programs
- Support development of new groups



## OBJECTIVES

- Identify current Extension volunteer monitoring programs
- Develop multi-media training materials
- Offer training programs
- Develop & establish internet and web-based tools
- Increase collaboration & cooperation



## GUIDE FOR GROWING CSREES VOLUNTEER MONITORING PROGRAMS

- Based on case studies of model programs
- Available in hardcopy and electronic forms

### • Modules:

- Why volunteer monitoring makes sense
  - Benefits to the local community, support organizations, and water quality
- Designing your monitoring strategy
  - Choosing methods most appropriate for meeting your specific objectives
- Effective training
  - Training basics, targeting your audience, and the value of partners



- Quality assurance
  - Meeting program's objectives
- Volunteer management
  - Comprehensive program coordination

- Outreach tools
  - Getting folks involved
- Locating support and funding
  - Building strong partnerships
- Overcoming networking barriers
  - How to use your data



### AMERICANS VOLUNTEER

- 44% of Americans (age 21+) volunteered in 2000
- Total of 15.5 billion hours
- \$239 billion in value (\$15.40 hourly rate)
- Average volunteer commits 3.6 hrs/wk
- Water quality programs are wise to tap into this resource
  - \* Data from: [www.IndependentSector.org](http://www.IndependentSector.org)

### WHY WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS IN WATER QUALITY MONITORING?

- Source of credible data
- More comprehensive data
  - Greater monitoring frequency
  - Larger # of sites monitored
- Tap into local knowledge
- Enhances local stewardship
- Gain support for your efforts
- Cost effective (not cost free)



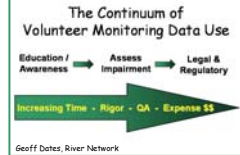
### MAIN USES OF VOLUNTEER DATA

- Water Quality or Watershed Education
- Problem Identification
- Local Decisions

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

### PROGRAM DESIGN

Must define goals and data uses



### PROGRAM MANAGEMENT



- Training & QA development
- Technical and logistical support
- Data management, interpretation, and reporting
- Budget management
- Staff & volunteer management
- Maintain relationships with partners, sponsors, & data users

## NATIONWIDE INQUIRY RESULTS

Extension Program Coordinators were asked questions on:

- Program Beginnings
- Training Techniques
- QA Measures
- Volunteer Support
- Tools
- Outreach Tools
- Program Funding

Example Inquiry Results:

Visit website to find out about other programs' training materials, displays, slide shows, videos, ID keys & educational activities

Question	Response
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality?	36
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your state?	12
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your county?	5
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your watershed?	3
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your neighborhood?	2
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your school?	1
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your workplace?	1
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your community?	1
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your country?	1
How many programs are currently monitoring water quality in your world?	1



## DATA REPORTING

- Developed online database that is being tested with the Water Action Volunteers (WAV) in Wisconsin
- Program Fact Sheet on database development and ongoing management in progress

<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/wav/datagate.htm>



## WEBSITE: TRACKING PROGRESS

[www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer](http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer)

## TRAININGS & TRAINING MATERIALS

- Offer training programs through CSREES
- Training presentations and material available on website

## CURRENT EXTENSION PROGRAMS

- Total of 36 known programs associated with Extension
- Monitor variety of habitats- rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wells, wetlands, & estuaries
- Contact info on each program available on web



## RELATED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Highlights educational and research programs that consider and involve volunteer water quality monitoring. For example, programs in the Great Lakes Region evaluating *e. coli* monitoring kits



## HIGHLIGHTED PROGRAMS

- Learn more in-depth information about individual programs
- Emphasizes accomplishments, outcomes, and impacts

