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Putting It All Together – Using Data to Tell the Story

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Abstract Text:

Well designed monitoring programs have clear goals for their data – whether it's building a solid water quality database for future trend analysis or documenting a pollution source in the watershed. And while state agencies' monitoring goals are typically to assess and report on a water body's health, volunteer monitors tend to be more interested in 'protecting' or 'improving', or just 'making a difference' in their favorite waterbody – in other words – they are action oriented. Therefore, many volunteer monitoring programs spend a significant amount of time and effort trying to get decision makers, stakeholders and the general public aware of the condition of those waterbodies and to take action. Presenting complex water quality information in an effective, relevant way that stimulates interest and action will be the focus of this interactive workshop.

We will share examples of reports, websites and other data presentation tools and strategies used by Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service - associated and other volunteer water quality monitoring programs to effectively present monitoring data. We will also examine indices and metrics, 'report cards' and 'traffic light' schema that have been created to help simplify monitoring data in order to foster better use of that information. We will conclude the workshop with an interactive discussion on "public friendly indicators".

Impact Statement:

Volunteer monitoring programs help educate the community while often providing credible data for basing water quality protection and restoration decisions on. The Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation project has helped strengthen volunteer monitoring programs affiliated with CSREES. This workshop was created to help volunteer monitoring programs more effectively present their data, helping communities to better understand their local resources.