

# Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

University of Rhode Island                      University of Wisconsin

## FACILITATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This National Facilitation project works to build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts across the country. The goal is to expand and strengthen the capacity of existing Extension volunteer monitoring programs and support development of new groups. The primary objectives of the project are:

- Identify and link current Extension volunteer monitoring programs in order to raise awareness and to share information and resources.
- Develop training materials that incorporate research results to support and strengthen Extension volunteer monitoring knowledge-base and efforts.
- Provide training to regional, state and local program coordinators to strengthen their capacity to incorporate volunteer monitors in addressing their priorities.
- Develop and establish Internet and web-based tools for data management, program delivery and networking for volunteer monitoring groups.
- Increase collaboration and cooperation with other agencies and programs through the establishment of a strong support system.

The facilitation project team has had great success working closely with state and regional CSREES Water Quality Programs to develop and offer regional and statewide volunteer monitoring training courses addressing local priorities. By interacting and communicating at national, regional and local scales we are able to enhance visibility, understanding and credibility of the role that volunteer monitoring can play to effectively address research, education and extension themes.



### EXTENSION VOLUNTEERS EDUCATE AND MOTIVATE CITIZENS FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Extension volunteer water quality monitoring programs have a unique capacity for capturing the excitement and attention of local communities. Through trained volunteers, these programs:

- heighten awareness of key local water quality issues;
- lead directly to voluntary adoption by citizens of recommended best management practices (BMPs) for water quality protection; and
- draw diverse audiences to other Extension water quality programs.

Extension volunteer monitoring programs have led to measurable improvements in local water quality. Furthermore, the capacity of Extension to deliver timely programs at the county, watershed and state levels is strengthened by Extension sponsored volunteer monitoring efforts.

### A 2005 SNAPSHOT OF EXTENSION VOLUNTEER WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAMS

30 States / Territories  
 45 Programs  
 More than 8,600 Trained Volunteers  
 Monitoring Wells, Lakes, Streams, Estuaries and Beaches  
 In Rural, Suburban and Urban Areas  
 100's of Thousands of Hours of Volunteer Time/Year  
 +\$6,600,000 Contribution of Service/Year

## Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring CSREES National Facilitation Project

### VOLUNTEER MONITORING EDUCATES THE COMMUNITY TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS



Volunteer water quality monitoring programs **create a two-way channel of communication** between the public and Extension. These efforts heighten the visibility and credibility of Extension education programs within the community. They involve a **wide spectrum of the community**, which in turn enhances Extension's ability to bring **local knowledge to diverse stakeholders**. Extension volunteer monitoring programs **encourage individual actions** to enhance water quality by providing pertinent, timely information on water quality issues.

### VOLUNTEER MONITORING CREATES MULTIPLIER EFFECTS

Volunteer monitoring - like master gardening and soil and plant testing programs - strengthens the delivery of a state's overall Extension water quality program. The data are used by a wide array of federal, state, local and tribal agencies, as well as by researchers, educators and watershed groups.

**Monitoring programs are steppingstones** that broaden and deepen Extension's community involvement. They create "**multiplier effects**" as trained citizen volunteer monitors carry their knowledge, concern, commitment, and energy into other areas of their community's life.

### GETTING INVOLVED

- Learn more about Extension volunteer monitoring efforts at <http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/>.
- Adapt and use the *Guide to Growing* and other training materials available on our website.
- Exchange information with state water quality and monitoring program coordinators by joining our Internet listserv at <http://lists.uwex.edu/mailman/listinfo/csreesvolmon>.
- Invite us to provide training to your regional, state and local coordinators, or attend trainings offered in your area, and at the National CSREES Water Quality Conference or National Water Quality Monitoring Council Conference.
- If you work with an Extension-related program that is not listed, please let us know. We would also be pleased to include yours as one of our "highlighted programs."
- If you would like to start a volunteer monitoring program within Extension we would also like to hear from you. **We will provide whatever assistance we can to help you grow your program.**

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