



Evaluating Volunteer Monitoring Program Success

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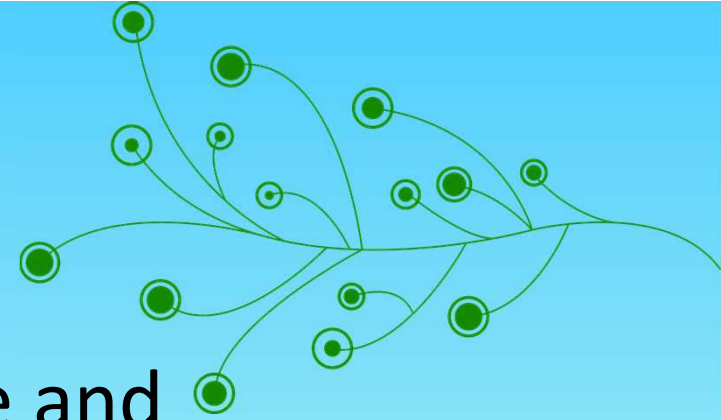
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Bill Deutsch and Sergio Ruiz-Cordova, Alabama Water Watch, Auburn University
Fisheries Department and Alabama Extension

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Department of Natural Resources

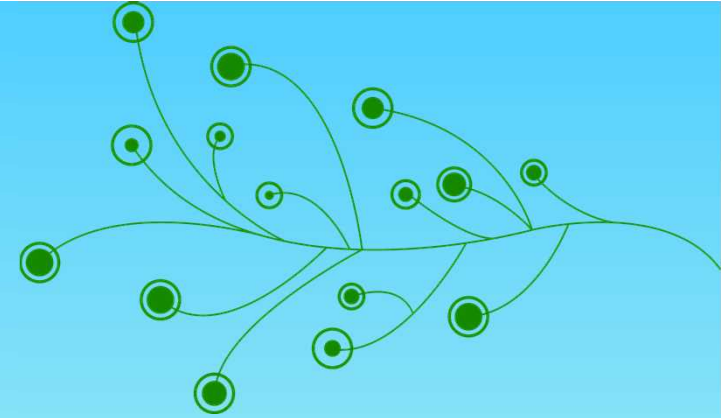
Kris Stepenuck, Wisconsin Water Action Volunteers, UW-Extension and WI Department
of Natural Resources

Why Evaluate?



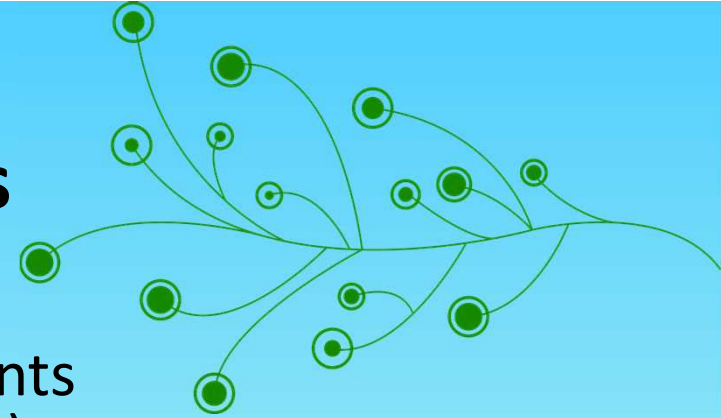
- To inform you about the state and effectiveness of your program or initiative
- To provide information that can be used to evolve, refine or improve your efforts
- To collect evidence or progress towards intended outcomes to communicate your impact

What to Evaluate?



- Program improvement
 - Is the program reaching those it intends to serve?
 - To what degree is the program successful in achieving its goals?
 - Is the program cost-effective?
- Program impacts
 - What are desired outcomes and to what degree have they been achieved?

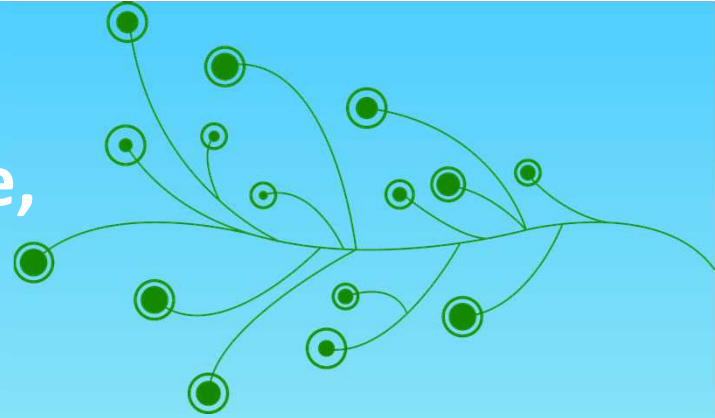
Examples of Desired Outcomes



- To identify unimpaired stream segments (those which fully support aquatic life)
- To ensure boats and trailers have mussel prevention stickers
- To describe baseline conditions of a lake
- To simplify the data submission process so more data are entered
- To engage citizens in water quality monitoring
- To provide credible data to decision-makers
- To report information to interested parties on a regular basis
- To provide information to beach users about swimming/surfing safety as related to bacteria
- To assist volunteers in putting their data to action

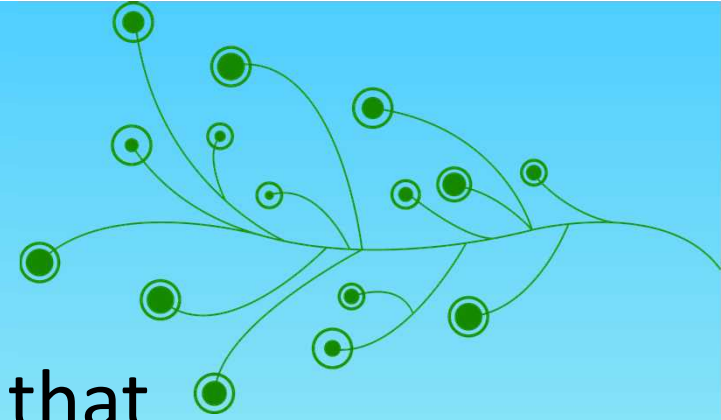
Outcomes Related to Learning : Changes in Awareness, Knowledge, or Understanding

- Citizens have a better understanding of local water quality issues
- Citizens have more information about the safety of their beaches available to them



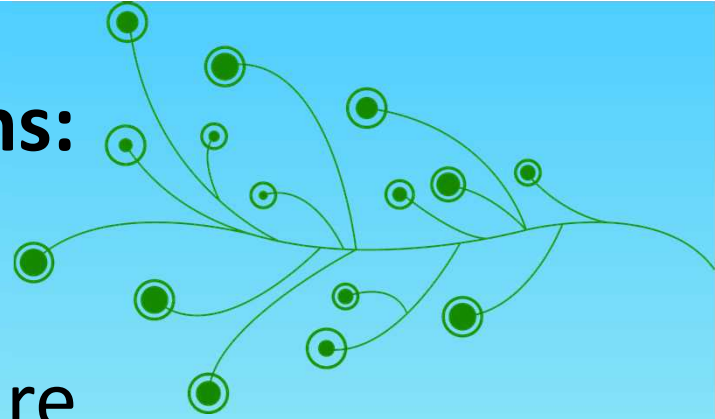
Outcomes Related to Learning : Changes in Behavior, Skill or Capacity

- Boaters will change habits so that no new mussel species will be introduced to Clear Lake

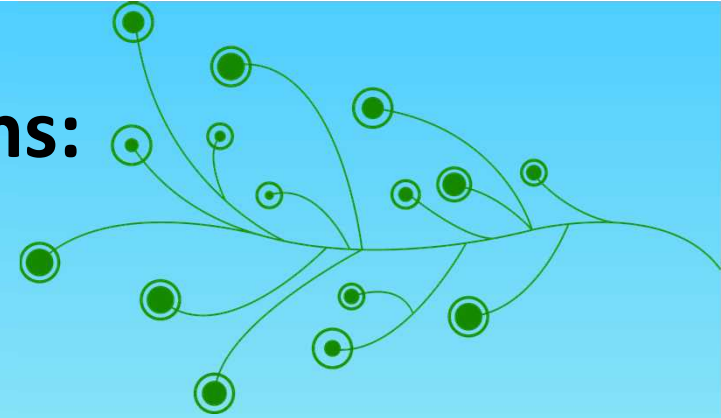


Outcomes Related to Conditions: Environmental Impacts

- Local beach pollution issues are resolved



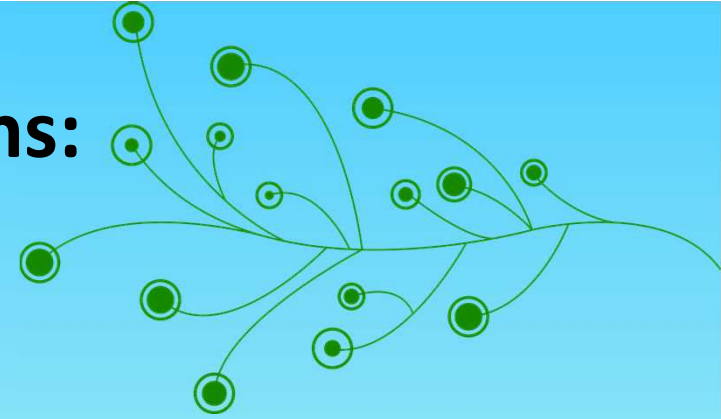
Outcomes Related to Conditions: Impacts on Policy



- More waterbodies are given protected status by state or federal statutes
- Policies are implemented that help minimize water quality declines in currently “clean” waters

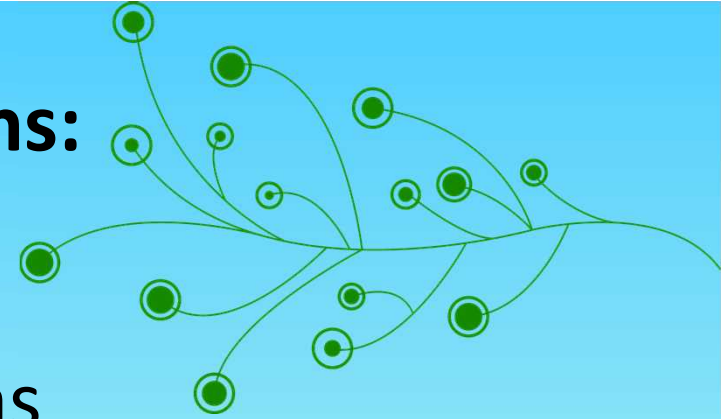
Outcomes Related to Conditions:

Financial Impacts



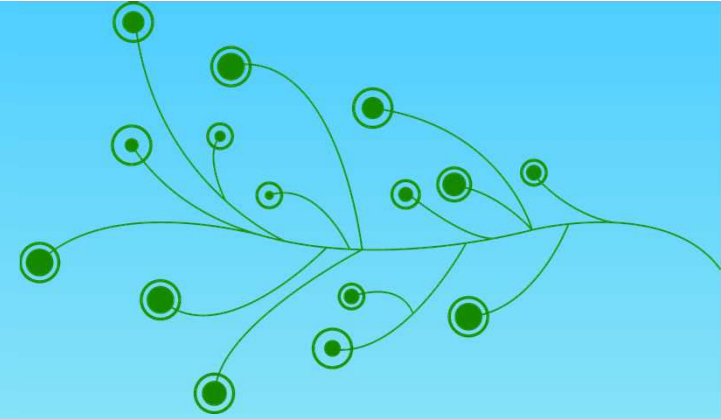
- The state Department of Environmental Quality saved \$17,712 in one year when 100 sites were monitored for phosphorus six times during the year by volunteers
 - Cost savings included staff wages and mileage costs

Outcomes Related to Conditions: Organizational Impacts



- A public works committee was established to study why more than 50% of volunteer-collected bacteria samples from the local beach were above health standards

Five Steps for Successful Evaluation



1. Engage stakeholders
2. Develop questions
3. Identify direct and indirect indicators
4. Develop a plan for collecting data and assign roles
5. Summarize and utilize findings