

# Cooperative Extension *and* Volunteer Monitoring: Rhode Island's Experience

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## Cooperative Extension: Meeting public needs at the local level

- Extension means reaching out
- Solving public needs via >100 universities/colleges
  - non-formal, non-credit programs
- 2900 county & regional Extension offices
  - Rural, suburban, urban



# Cooperative Extension Connections to Volunteer Monitoring

- Educational materials
- Technical assistance
- Conducts trainings
- Provides equipment, manpower
- Umbrella organization/service provider
- Collaborator (no funding)
- Program sponsor or co-sponsor
- Funding source



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# Rhode Island CE & Volunteer Monitoring = U of RI Watershed Watch

URI Watershed Watch began in 1987 by responding to a very basic, local question:

**What is the water quality of the lakes and ponds in the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed?**



# Main Ingredients

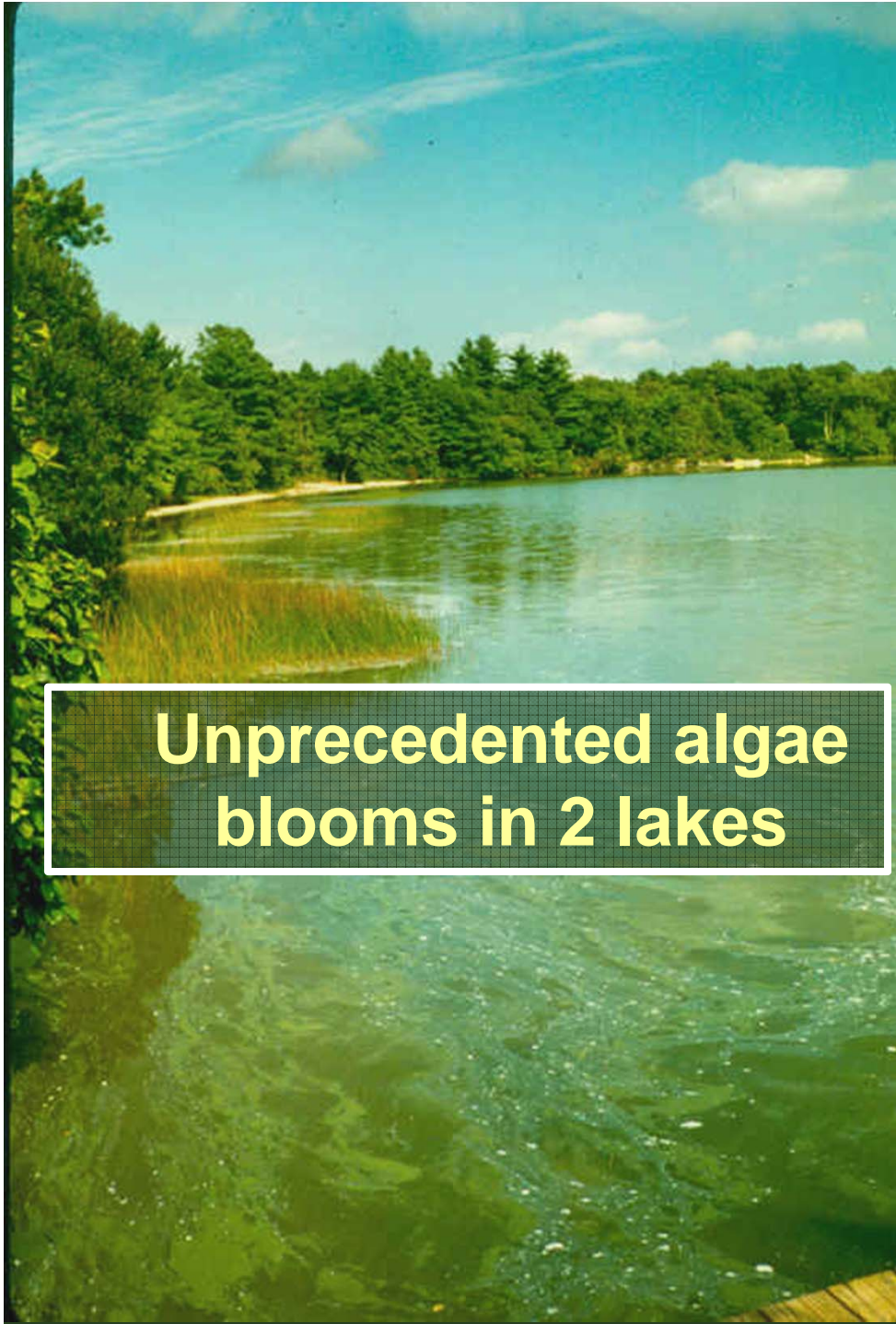
- ◆ URI Cooperative Extension Water Program
  - Faculty advisor - Watershed Hydrology prof (new)
  - Program coordinators – technical expertise
  - Experiential learning for URI students
- ◆ Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Assn = 1<sup>st</sup> local sponsor
- ◆ RI Dept Env. Mgt. (reluctant agency, no available staff )

## Model program - RI Salt Pond Watchers

One of oldest estuary VM programs

No interest in expanding to freshwater

**National & regional VM workshops**  
**Learning from peers & experts**



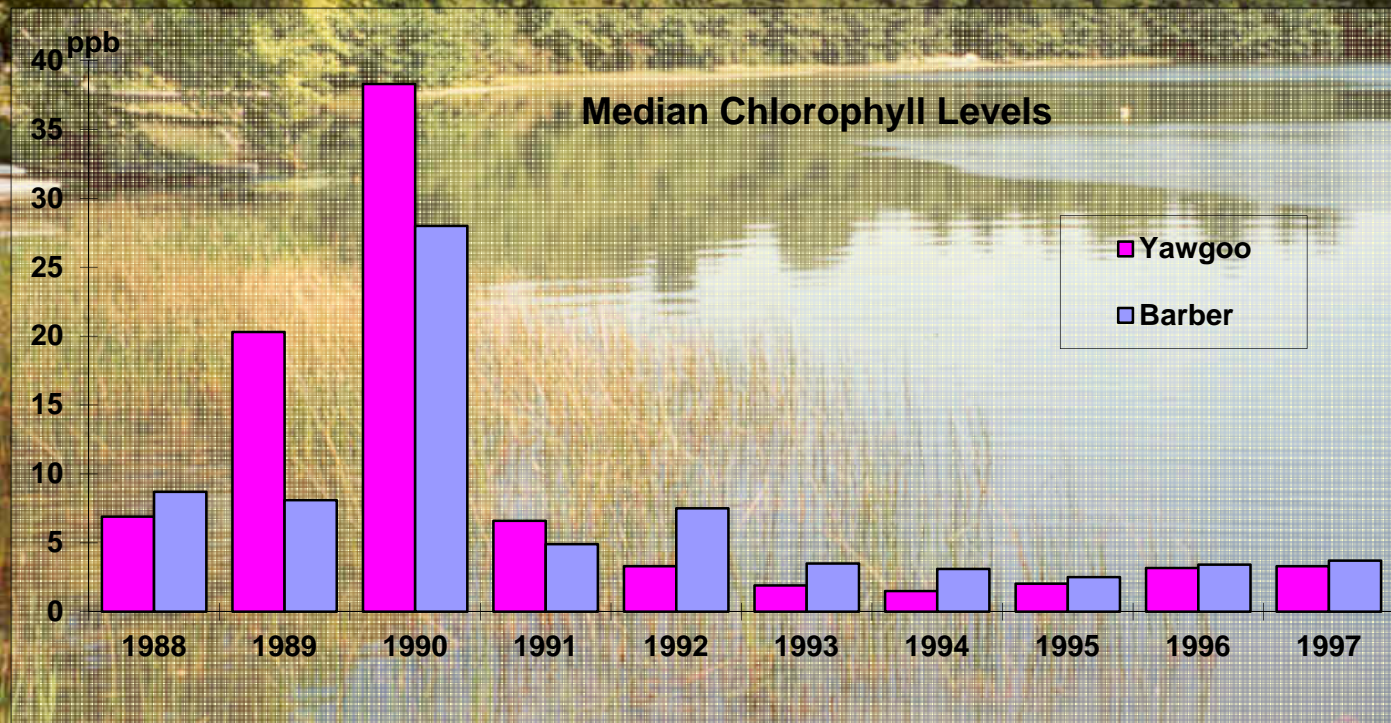
**Unprecedented algae blooms in 2 lakes**

## Year 2: Early test of WW credibility

- **DEM: this is normal or due to development**
- **95% wooded watershed**
- **only ones in WW program w. blooms**
- **DEM: Poor data = GREAT way to end VM**
- **DEM investigation corroborates URIWW**
- **Upstream shellfish plant closed**

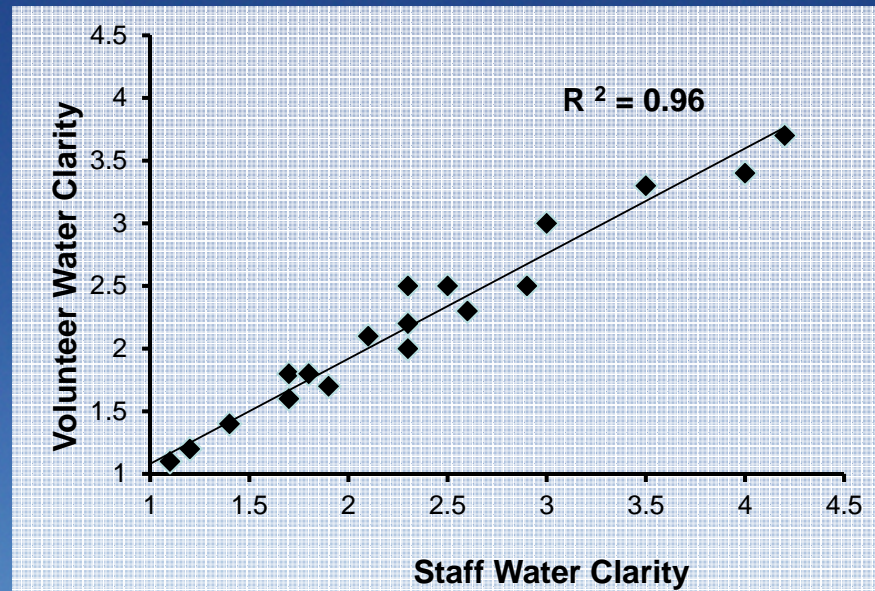


# Amazing Resiliency & Recuperative Power of Nature - Proof of the Power of Volunteers



3 6'01

**DEM provides grant to compare  
volunteers with professionals**



**URIWW data quality equivalent to  
professional data**

**DEM becomes a partner and major sponsor**

**URIWW Lab becomes state-certified**

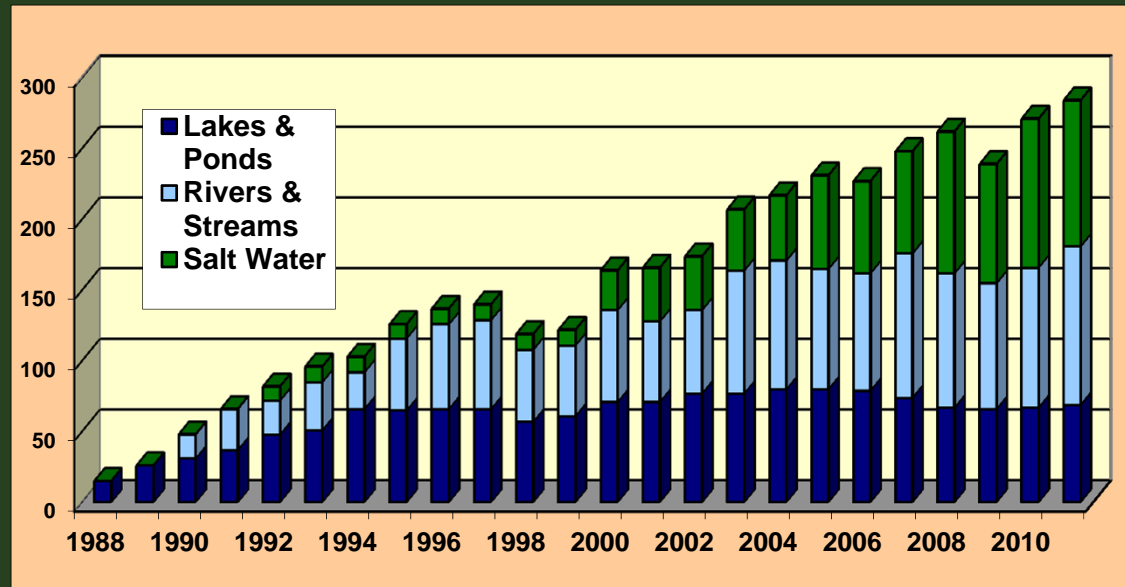
# Contributing Program Sponsors

- Municipal Conservations Commissions
- Environmental Organizations
- Sporting Organizations
- Water Districts
- Surfrider Foundation
- Lake/watershed Associations
- Businesses
- Narragansett Indian Tribe

**77**  
**since**  
**1988**

**40**  
**currently**

**Since 1988: 133 lake, 93 river, 130 tributary, 114 salt water sites**



**Currently ~**

**1/3 lakes, 1/3 rivers / streams, 1/3 salt water**

**Providing ~100% of state lake data, all small stream data, broadened salt water data**

Where would we be without our volunteers?



Providence Journal photo

# Important to note...

- 💧 VM is cost-effective, not cost-free
- 💧 VM intensity of effort & coverage
  - agency rotating basin, VM weekly
  - places where no one else is looking
- 💧 VM willing to learn and do it right
  - credibility paramount
- 💧 Value in being non-regulatory (good neighbor)
- 💧 VM become environmentally active
- 💧 Ripple effect to other CE WQ programs

# Key to Success

- ◆ Emulate successful programs
  - ME, VT, NH
  - learn from professionals & peers at conferences
- ◆ Home organization (URI) strong supporter
  - \$, staff, expertise, lab
- ◆ Multiple funding sources provide stability
  - Annual fee for local sponsors
    - Anything is expensive if it used to be free
- ◆ May still need supplemental funding

# Must Supplement Funding

- Needed for staff salaries
  - indirect costs (benefits) ~50% of salary
  - Archaic USDA rules
- Supplemental Grants a must
  - Analyzing septic system waste components
  - USDA National Water Program – NE \$
  - USDA National VM efforts
    - Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network



# Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network

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



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

## Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

National Water Resource Project

A Partnership of USDA NIFA  
& Land Grant Colleges and Universities



This National Water Resource Project has created a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring and citizen science efforts across the country. The goal is to expand and strengthen the capacity of the existing Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network and to support development of new programs. We welcome comments and suggestions; our contact information is at the bottom of this page.

### Volunteer Monitoring

#### National Water Resource Project

[Project Description](#) (382 K pdf file)  
[2001 Nationwide Inquiry](#)  
[Outreach Materials and Activities](#)  
[Online Databases](#)  
[Training Modules](#)

#### Extension Volunteer Monitoring Network Programs

[Program Listings](#)  
[Master Naturalist Programs](#)  
[Breaking News](#)  
[Current Highlight: MT Watercourse](#)  
[Highlighted Program Archives](#)  
[Job postings](#)

#### Researching and Validating Volunteer Monitoring

[Validation Studies](#)  
[Other Volunteer Monitoring Research](#)

#### Related Research and Educational Efforts

[Select Archives of Volunteer Monitoring Listserv Discussions](#)



### Guide for Growing Programs


[Getting Started](#) (234 K pdf)  
[Why Monitoring Makes Sense](#) (582 K pdf)  
[Designing Your Monitoring Strategy](#) (1.6 M pdf)  
[Monitoring Matrix](#) (80 K pdf)  
[Effective Training](#) (986 K pdf)  
[Monitoring Equipment Suppliers](#) (437 KB pdf)  
[Direct Links to Monitoring Programs' Manuals \(online\)](#)  
[Building Credibility](#) (1.5 M pdf)  
[Sharing Information Through Internet Exchanges](#) (1 M pdf)  
[Volunteer Management](#) (7 M pdf)  
[Planning Your Program's Data Management System](#) (6 M pdf)  
[Tips and Tools for Effective Presentations](#) (95 K pdf)  
[Outreach Tools](#) (1.4 M pdf)  
[Fundraising](#) (2.3 M pdf)

### Of Special Interest

[Remembering Ellie Ely](#)  
[Volunteer Monitor](#)

[Upcoming Events](#) >>



A scenic view of a lake with a rainbow in the sky and trees in the background. The rainbow is positioned in the center-left of the frame, arching over the water. The sky is a mix of light blue and grey, suggesting an overcast day. The water is calm and reflects the sky. In the foreground, there are some dark, silhouetted trees on the right side. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

“It is in the marriage of credible data and increased stewardship behavior that the true potential and vitality of citizen monitoring begins to emerge.”

-Steven Hubbell, Colorado River Watch