



Water: One Resource – Shared Effort – Common Future

Eighth National Monitoring Conference

Vision Award

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council's Vision Award recognizes a monitoring council or group that has demonstrated extraordinary vision and cooperation in the field of water quality monitoring on a local or regional level to enhance the management and protection of aquatic resources.



In recognition of extraordinary vision, collaboration and leadership in water quality monitoring and environmental protection, the National Water Quality Monitoring Council is pleased to present the 2012 Vision Award to the

Central Plains Center for Bioassessment

**Director Don Huggins and Assistant Director Debra Baker
Kansas Biological Survey
Lawrence, Kansas**

The Central Plains Center for Bioassessment plays a pivotal role in monitoring water quality in the Central Plains region through the visionary actions of Don Huggins, Director and Debra Baker, Assistant Director. The Center is committed to providing scientific expertise on aquatic resources in the region as well as bringing together stakeholders, scientists, natural resource managers, and students to monitor streams, lakes, and wetlands.

Don Huggins conceived a center for bioassessment in 1997 for the purpose of collecting existing data and making it available for the region. He did not want researchers and natural resource managers to waste time “reinventing the wheel” by redoing research that had already been done. This led to the creation of a database of past data, including published and unpublished research. Data acquisition went back to 1960 but most of the data spans the early 1980s to the present. Debbie Baker has seen this vision to its fruition; a massive database with macroinvertebrate, fish, and water quality data from four states in the Central Plains (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska). Anyone can request the data through the Center for free.

The Center has brought together a diverse array of partners to work on various aspects of water monitoring in the Central Plains for over 13 years. They brought together natural resource managers from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska to discuss sampling methods and to search for a common ground in their methods to facilitate monitoring of water resources that spanned state lines. Then they created Regional Technical Assistance Groups or RTAGS comprised of scientists from academia and from state and federal government organizations. The RTAGs work on nutrient and biological criteria for lakes and streams, on monitoring the Missouri River, on monitoring sedimentation regional aquatic ecosystems, and on the management of taste and odor problems mostly from reservoirs. The Center is always working to raise regional awareness of water quality issues through publications, reports to policy makers, and through outreach. Debbie Baker coordinates environmental outreach to communities in the Central Plains through educational and training workshops, through hosting and/or assisting with volunteer stream monitoring, and through visiting schools and participating in events such as the Lawrence Earth Day celebration.

Congratulations, Central Plains Center for Bioassessment!