NWQMC
NATIONAL WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL
Working Together for Clean Water

Collaboration and Outreach Work Group

Accomplishing More Together

Why focus on collaboration and comparability?

Each year, government agencies (federal, state, and local), industry, academic researchers, and a wide variety of additional organizations in the United States devote enormous amounts of time and resources to the monitoring, protection, and restoration of water resources and watersheds. This work includes, but is not limited to:

- Monitoring the status and trends in water quality;
- Identifying and ranking existing and emerging problems;
- Designing and implementing resource management programs;
- Determining compliance with regulatory programs;
- Reporting water quality monitoring results; and
- Educating stakeholders about the importance of the monitoring results.

The information gathered through these activities is certainly useful to the data collectors themselves. However, differences in project design, methods, data analysis, and data management often make it difficult for monitoring data and information to be integrated, shared, and used by others. Accurate, cost-effective, and efficient assessment of the nation's water resources—within and among watersheds—requires that the full spectrum of monitoring organizations work collaboratively and strive for comparability in methods, data management, and data analysis. The design and implementation of assessment and management programs can be a cooperative product of the various monitoring agencies and organizations active in a watershed sharing their various concerns.

Creating a framework for collaboration and comparability among programs is key to the promotion and success of a national monitoring strategy. Collaboration among programs is possible only if there is both the technical and institutional framework to promote data comparability as well as the willingness to share and to work together. Collaboration is greatly enhanced when programs employ common strategies for data storage, retrieval and analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

What is the value of collaboration?

What if monitoring programs could pursue their own goals and activities and also easily use data from other sources to support their needs?

What if data and information from a variety of sources could be aggregated to improve coverage across one or more watersheds?

What if programs plan to use monitoring information collaboratively to better understand how to protect and manage our waters and watersheds?

What if this integration, aggregation, and collaboration achieved a better return on public and private investments?

These "what if's" can only be realized if we all work collaboratively!

Purpose of the Work Group

The Collaboration and Outreach Work Group is a partnership of water quality experts drawn from federal agencies, states, municipalities, industry, universities, volunteer monitoring programs, and related organizations.

The purpose of the Work Group is two-fold:

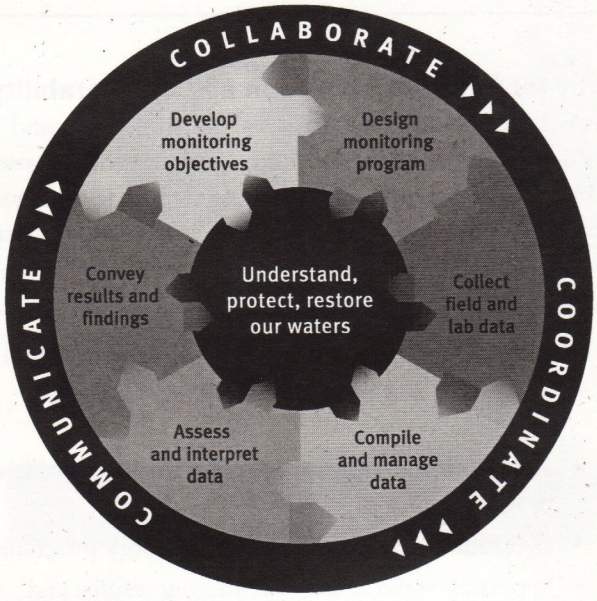
- to foster the creation of partnerships to improve communication, coordination, and collaboration among the many elements of the water monitoring community; and
- to promote the importance of monitoring for decision-making.

Foster the Development of State and Regional Monitoring Councils. These groups promote better use of available monitoring resources through collaboration, communication, and coordination of programs. Councils in more than a dozen locations have been formed in the last several years. Workshops and presentations prepared by the NWQMC discuss the progress and challenges faced by these burgeoning collaborative efforts, and provide guidance to both existing councils and those being considered.

Web sites for these councils have been linked together on the Council Web site to heighten awareness. See Web site at:
http://acwi.gov/monitoring/regional_councils.html

Collaboration and Outreach Activities

Develop a Framework for Monitoring. The monitoring and assessment process is a sequence of activities that begins by developing monitoring objectives and ends when findings are conveyed and the information is used to make an informed water resources decision. The Council has developed this framework as a visual representation of the monitoring process and is promoting its use as a means to foster communication and collaboration between programs and to guide the activities of the Council.



See Council Fact Sheet "A Framework for Water Quality Monitoring."

Host National Monitoring Conferences. The Council's effort to build communication and cooperation has been realized by sponsoring national monitoring conferences to provide a forum for sharing monitoring information. These conferences have been held on a biennial basis since 1998. Each conference has been well attended by representatives from a wide array of the monitoring community including representatives from monitoring organizations around the world. These conferences bring the monitoring community together to learn from each other, to debate and discuss the myriad issues involved in an effective and efficient monitoring strategy, to increase cooperation across community borders, and to provide input to the National Council.

Promote products that support monitoring. The national representation on the Work Group provides expertise and other benefits to the water quality monitoring community including:

- News of the publications, tools, and techniques available to implement the framework for monitoring;
- Guidance on how to form and sustain coalitions and councils;
- Examples of successful collaborative monitoring approaches;
- Information and materials on the work of the Council.

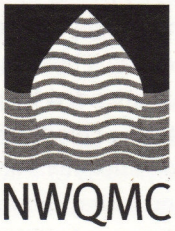
About the NWQMC

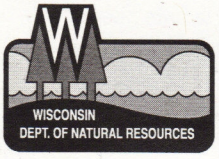
The National Water Quality Monitoring Council (Council) provides a national forum to coordinate consistent and scientifically defensible methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting. The Council promotes partnerships that foster collaboration, advance the science, and improve management within all elements of the water quality monitoring community. A vital aspect of this role is fostering increased understanding and stewardship of our water resources.

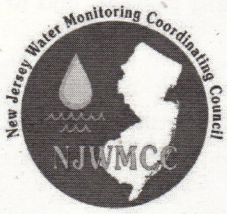
The Council was created in 1997 as a vehicle for bringing together the diverse expertise, skills, and talents needed to develop collaborative, comparable, and cost-effective approaches to water quality monitoring. The Council's 35 members represent federal, state, interstate, local, and municipal governments; watershed and environmental groups; the volunteer monitoring community; universities; and the private sector, including the regulated community. These members meet several times a year in locations throughout the country. The Council is organized into work groups whose activities and products advance its goals. Current work groups are *Water Information Strategies, Methods and Data Comparability Board, Collaboration and Outreach,* and *National Monitoring Network.*

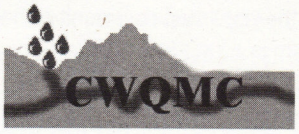
The Council is co-chaired by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It is a subgroup of the Advisory Committee on Water Information that is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

State and Regional Water Monitoring Councils

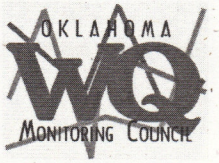








Colorado Water Quality Monitoring Council



Texas Water Monitoring Council

Indiana Water Monitoring Council

Common Elements of State and Regional Councils

- Communicate, Collaborate, Coordinate
- Document Activities
- Use Resources Efficiently
- Raise Public Awareness
- Keep Process Inclusive

Common Activities of State and Regional Councils

- Network Design and Coordination
- Data Inventory and Management (Includes GIS)
- Annual Conferences
- Field and Analytical Methods and QA/QC
- Data Interpretation or Reporting

Additional information can be obtained from the National Water Quality Monitoring Council's Web site at:

http://acwi.gov/monitoring/

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