



**NWQMC**  
NATIONAL WATER QUALITY  
MONITORING COUNCIL

*Working Together for Clean Water*

# National Water Quality Monitoring Council

## **Collaborative Partnership for Water Quality Monitoring**

### **Introduction**

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council (Council) provides an opportunity for the monitoring community to develop consensus-based approaches and tools for monitoring and reporting on water quality. The Council promotes partnerships that foster collaboration, advance the science, and improve management of our water resources. The Council strives to represent the full range of the monitoring community.

### **Council Mission**

*Provide a national forum to coordinate consistent and scientifically defensible methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting.*

### **The Challenge of Multi-Agency Monitoring**

Each year government agencies, industry, academia and private organizations devote enormous amounts of time, energy, and money to monitor, protect, manage, and restore water resources and watersheds. Differences in project design, methods, data analysis, and data management have often made it difficult for monitoring information and results to be shared and used by all. The restoration and protection of water quality is dependent upon detailed, understandable, and easily accessible data and information.

### **Responding to the Challenge: The National Water Quality Monitoring Council**

The Council provides guidance and technical support for voluntary implementation of actions that advance the science of monitoring. This is best accomplished in an arena of collaborative and coordinated efforts communicated to all interested parties. In sum these actions will ultimately improve water quality monitoring. The Council encourages use of metadata, lab accreditation, methods documentation, and other procedures that contribute to the broadest possible acceptance, sharing, and use of water quality data. The Council promotes effective communication of monitoring results and findings to decision-makers and the general public. In some cases, Council work groups develop tools and techniques. Examples of these are the National Environmental Methods Index and Water Quality Data Elements. In other cases, the Council provides a venue for wide-ranging discussion and dissemination of new methods and technologies developed by others through its Web site and at its National Monitoring Conferences.



## Membership and Organization

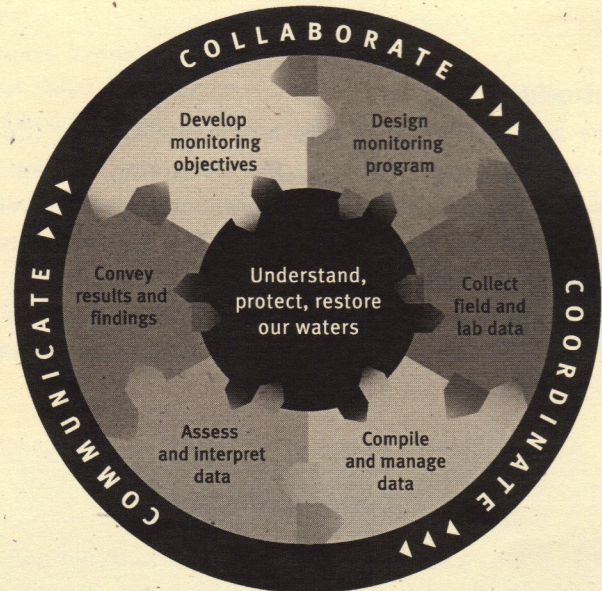
The Council was created in 1997 as a vehicle for bringing together the diverse expertise, skills, and talents needed to develop collaborative, comparable, and cost-effective approaches to water quality monitoring. The Council's 35 members represent the monitoring community: federal, tribal, state, interstate, local, and municipal governments; watershed and environmental groups; the volunteer monitoring community; academia; and the private sector including the regulated community. These are organizations that collect, analyze, interpret, disseminate, or use water quality monitoring information as well as those that develop monitoring technology, guidelines, and/or standards. The Council is co-chaired by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Council reports to the Advisory Committee on Water Information that operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

### Council Work Groups

- **Water Information Strategies** defines and promotes goal-oriented monitoring by proposing strategies for network design, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting results in support of the information needs of water quality management.
- **Methods and Data Comparability Board** provides a forum for exploring, evaluating, and promoting methods that facilitate collaboration and further comparability among water quality monitoring programs.
- **Collaboration and Outreach** works to build partnerships that foster collaboration among the many elements of the water monitoring community, particularly by supporting the development of state and regional monitoring councils, sponsoring biennial National Monitoring Conferences, and promoting the importance of monitoring for decision-making.
- **National Monitoring Network Work Group** provides advice on the design and implementation of a National Monitoring Network under the Ocean Action Plan. The goal of the Network is to provide information about the health of our oceans and coastal ecosystems for improved resource management including inland influences on coastal waters.

## A Framework for Monitoring

The Council, with broad and significant input from the monitoring community, has developed a pictorial framework for monitoring that shows the components of the monitoring process (as a series of interlinked cogs) needed to understand, protect, and restore our water resources. Incorporating the components of this framework into monitoring projects will improve monitoring efforts, results, and communication of information.



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

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## Council Activities and Products

The Council has taken a number of steps to encourage the water quality monitoring community to integrate the components of the monitoring framework into their efforts. The following examples of Council activities and products showcase efforts to improve data comparability and reliability as well as to foster institutional collaboration:

- Organizing and sponsoring biennial **National Monitoring Conferences** since 1998; each conference attended by more than 400 active participants representing a wide spectrum of the monitoring community. These conferences provide a national forum to present and explore methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting as well as presenting specific ways to foster collaboration and coordination.

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To participate in the National Monitoring Conference, visit:  
<http://acwi.gov/monitoring>

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- Providing guidance and support for **State and Regional Water Quality Monitoring Councils** (see *Council Fact Sheet "Accomplishing More Together"*). These councils bring members of the monitoring community together to share their expertise and knowledge and to promote strategic monitoring efforts at an appropriate scale.
- Sponsoring development and adoption of the **National Environmental Methods Index (NEMI)** that provides assistance in choosing appropriate field and laboratory methods to meet specified monitoring objectives. See [www.nemi.gov](http://www.nemi.gov) for additional information.
- Sponsoring development and adoption of the **Water Quality Data Elements** — metadata that should be included with water quality results so that data comparability can be assessed.
- Publishing position papers on **Laboratory Accreditation** that describe a process that will give regulators and others in the monitoring community confidence that water quality data have been produced by qualified personnel using appropriate quality control and quality assurance procedures. (See *Accreditation of Laboratory and Field Activities for Water Quality Monitoring*.)
- Designing a **National Monitoring Network for U.S. Coastal Waters and their Tributaries** and conducting pilot studies in three areas (Delaware Bay, San Francisco Bay, and Lake Michigan) to identify gaps in existing monitoring data. The Council continues to make recommendations regarding further demonstration and implementation of the Network to better integrate, coordinate, and enhance water quality monitoring to make more informed management decisions regarding coastal ecosystems. (Learn more about the Network at: <http://acwi.gov/monitoring/network>)
- The Council meets periodically in various regions around the country to hear about regional water quality issues and to review and approve the latest recommendations and products from its work groups. Minutes and presentations from these meetings are located on the Council Website. The Council publishes a series of Technical Reports as well as special issues on monitoring in water quality journals.

## Member organizations of the Council

### Federal:

U.S. Geological Survey  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Tennessee Valley Authority  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Park Service  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Forest Service

### States representing Federal regions:

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
Alabama Department of Environmental Management  
Indiana Department of Environmental Management  
California State Water Resources Control Board  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Vermont Department of Environmental Services  
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality  
Utah Department of Water Quality

### Other:

Water Environment Federation  
North American Lake Management Society  
National Association of State Conservation Agencies  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies  
Association of American State Geologists  
Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission  
American Society of Limnology and Oceanography  
American Chemistry Council  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies  
National Institutes of Water Resources  
Great Lakes Commission  
Dickinson College

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

<http://acwl.gov/monitoring/>



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