

Cooperative Extension Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Inquiry

We sincerely appreciate your taking the time to complete this inquiry. We're looking forward to sharing your knowledge and experiences as we work together to support and strengthen Cooperative Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts nationally. At the end of this inquiry there is space for you to provide additional information or comments. We are especially interested in any particularly effective methods, techniques or other information that may have been the key to your program's success!

I. Contact Information (Please update as necessary)

II. Types of monitoring activities available

Successful Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts cover a wide range of activities and environments, addressing numerous issues and concerns. In order for us to convey the full range of monitoring activities available, the appropriate uses of those activities, and typical program strategies, this section has some basic questions about your monitoring program, what is monitored, and how those methods were/are determined.

A. What year did your program begin? _____

B. Briefly describe why your program began:

C. Please fill in the following table to describe the types of environments monitored and extents to which they were monitored when your program initially began and are today.

Environment	Initially		Today	
	Approx. # of Volunteers	Approx. # of Monitoring Locations	Approx. # of Volunteers	Approx. # of Monitoring Locations
River/Stream				
Lake/Pond/Reservoir				
Wells				
Beach				
Wetlands				
Estuary/Marine				
Other:				

D. What is the overall monitoring schedule for your program? Please mark the option that best applies to your program. Monitoring is conducted:

- Year-round Seasonally Sporadically One time only or annually
 Other (Please explain) _____

E. How did your program determine what to monitor? (Please check all that apply.)

- Chose parameters used by a similar program
 Steering committee chose parameters
 Project staff chose parameters
 Instrument or equipment (or funds for) for monitoring a parameter was/was not available
 Environmental agency recommendations
 Used existing guidance documents (Please list) _____
 Other (Please explain) _____

F. How did your program develop?

- Evolved over time – parameters and methods added with time
 All at once – all parameters and methods were instated at the same point in time
 Other (Please explain) _____

G. Who initially helped you with program development and technical support? (Please check all that apply.)

- Cooperative Extension (CE) experts
 Other experts (Please identify by organization) _____
 Technical advisory/ steering committee (might include CE and other experts)
 Volunteer monitoring colleagues
 Volunteer monitoring conferences (Please name) _____
 Websites
 Other (Please explain) _____

H. Who do you turn to now for continued program development and technical support? (Please check all that apply.)

- Cooperative Extension experts
 Other experts (Please identify by organization) _____
 Technical advisory/ steering committee (CE and/or other experts)
 Volunteer monitoring colleagues
 Volunteer monitoring conferences (Please name) _____
 Websites
 Other _____

III. Effective Training Techniques

Differing program goals require various levels and types of volunteer training. We would like to learn how your program prepares your volunteers for the tasks they perform.

A. What kind of training does your program provide for your volunteers? (Please check all that apply.)

- Classroom Field No training provided
 Training video Written manual Other (Please explain) _____

B. Approximately how many hours of training does your program provide volunteers each year?

New volunteer: _____ hours Returning volunteer: _____ hours

C. What topics does your program typically cover in your volunteer training sessions? Please check the appropriate column or columns.

Topic	New Volunteers	Returning Volunteers
Program background/scope		
Safety precautions/liability waivers		
Site access issues (legalities)		
Ecology of the ecosystem(s) to be studied		
Sampling protocols and techniques		
Data analysis techniques		
How the program data have been used		
Equipment maintenance		
Information about other CSREES programs		
Data quality assurance/quality control issues		
Other (Please explain)		

D. Who conducts the training for your program? (Please check all that apply.)

- Paid program staff
- Scientists/monitoring professionals
- Service provider organization
- Guest presenters
- Program-trained volunteer trainers
- Returning volunteers
- Student interns
- Other (Please explain) _____

E. Are your volunteers given a written exam following training?

- Yes
- No

F. What type of follow-up interaction does your program have with volunteers following training?

- Newsletter
- On-site visits
- Direct mailings
- Other (Please explain) _____
- Quality Assurance sessions/meetings
- Website
- Phone calls

IV. Quality Assurance Issues

Issues of quality assessment and quality control (QA/QC) are especially important, and sometimes controversial with volunteer monitoring efforts. Again, differing program goals and resources influence the type and extent of QA/QC measures. In order to assist Extension programs that may be facing the challenge of adequately ensuring the quality of their data, we are interested in how your program addresses QA/QC issues.

A. How do you currently document your program's procedures? (Please check all that apply.)

- USEPA approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QuAPP)
- State approved QA plan
- Basic monitoring plan (where, what, when, how, and who defined in plan)
- No formal Quality Assurance/Quality Control plan
- Other (Please explain) _____

B. When your program was being developed, how were the QA/QC methods used to meet your quality assurance goals determined? (Please check all that apply.)

- Adopted QA methods directly from an existing program
- Adapted QA methods from existing programs
- Developed new QA methods for your program
- Did not consider connection between methodology and quality assurance goals when developing your program
- Other (Please explain) _____

C. Recognizing that QA/QC procedures vary with methods, parameters, and data objectives, please indicate the methods your program employs, and the associated parameters.

QC Assessment method	Parameter(s)
Field blanks	
Replicate field samples (Duplicates)	
Duplicate field measurements (i.e. Secchi depth, temperature)	
Analytical replicates (sub-samples of 1 sample)	
External (independently collected) field duplicates	
Spiked samples	
Calibration blanks	
Calibration samples	
Negative or positive plates/tubes	
Samples split with another lab	
Duplicate samples analyzed by another lab	
Known QC standards analysis	
Unknown QC standards analysis	
Others (Please explain)	

If there are no QA/QC methods used in your program, please check here: _____



V. Volunteer Management and Support Tools

As you know, successful volunteer monitoring efforts require more than simply training folks to collect a water sample. Volunteer recruitment, training, and support are all necessary ongoing activities in order to retain volunteers. These are vital to the success of any long-term effort. Your experiences can help other programs improve their management and support, or get new programs off to a good start.

A. Please estimate the *total* number of hours provided *annually* by *all* volunteers in your program during 2001. (This should only be a “back of envelope” estimate as opposed to an “Annual report” accounting – we know how long those take!)

_____ hours/year

B. Again as a rough estimate, what is the age composition of participants in your program? Respond either by the percentage or by number of people, whichever is easier for you.

Participant group	%	#
Senior citizens		
Working-age people		
College-age volunteers		
Youths under age 18		
Under-served* groups (if tribes, which?)		

*Underserved is defined as tribal, low-income or inner-city communities, and ethnic minorities

C. To what extent are the following groups targeted by your programs?

Participant group	Minor	Major	Not Targeted
1. Farmers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Civic groups (Scouts, Rotarians, Trout Unlimited, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Watershed/Conservation groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Non-targeted general public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Traditionally underserved* audience (Please describe)_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Other (Please describe)_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Underserved is defined as tribal, low-income or inner-city communities, and ethnic minorities

D. Why do you believe your volunteers choose to involve themselves in monitoring?

Motivation	Minor	Major	Not a Reason
1. Desire to protect/improve their favorite waterbody	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Looking for an outdoor activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Acting on general environmental concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Looking for good family activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Interest in learning about natural history/water quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Perceive a water quality problem with a body of water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Build resume or fulfill community service requirement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Looking to be a part of a volunteer effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Other (Please explain)_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E. What types of on-going program support do you provide or make available to your volunteers? (Please check all that apply.)

Conferences

- Notification of conferences and workshops outside of your program
- Annual meeting/celebration/conference (in addition to training)

Communications

- Volunteer Monitor* newsletter
- Program newsletter
- Other publications (Please list) _____
- Program website
- Links to other programs websites
- Data analysis and reporting
- Regular meetings throughout year (or sampling season)
- Periodic site visits by staff (to volunteer monitoring sites)
- Email list or list server for volunteers
- Staff consultation with individual monitors

Other types of on-going program support available to your volunteers

- Various levels of monitoring from which volunteers can choose
- Advanced training sessions for experienced monitors
- Awards for monitors
- Certificates recognizing participation
- Caps, mugs, t-shirts or other "stuff"
- Water quality-related recreational/social opportunities
- Coordination with other water quality programs
- Other (Please explain) _____

F. To what extent are the following topics concerns to your program?

Potential Concern	Minor	Major	Not a concern
1. Liability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Legal access to monitoring sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Loss of volunteer motivation over time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Use or acceptance of data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Limited/Excessive numbers of volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Lack of equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Lack of staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Stability/quantity of funding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Other significant issues affecting program (Please explain): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



VI. Outreach Tools

As the 'outreach' arm of USDA, Extension programs, including volunteer monitoring efforts, expend a considerable amount of time and resources on outreach activities. And while we all use the same basic tools (e.g. newsletters, press releases, etc.) we often hear about remarkably successful or innovative ideas to "get the word out". This section lets you to do a little bragging, as we look for the best, and worst outreach tools used by Extension monitoring programs. We will be following up via email or phone to learn more from you later.

A. In the table below, please indicate the types of materials your program has, and if they are available to other groups.

Outreach Tool	Developed?	Available for Purchase?	Available for free?
1. Sampling protocols/methodology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Training materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Display(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Slide Show(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Video(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Identification key(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Educational Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Game(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Other (Please explain) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

B. Please describe briefly the one or two outreach strategies or tools that you are most proud of, and why.

C. Sadly, things don't always work out as well as we intend. Please describe briefly one or two outreach strategies or tools that didn't work out well, and if you know why they didn't.

VII. Suggestions on finding support and funding for local efforts

Funding is a major issue with Extension and all volunteer monitoring programs. So that we can help groups to develop realistic budgets and identify potential funding sources, this final very brief section requests some basic information about program-related funding that will allow us to identify and address more detailed questions on the topic on the list server or another venue in coming months.

A. What is your monitoring program's approximate annual budget?

- less than \$5,000
- \$5,000-\$20,000
- \$20,000-\$50,000
- \$50,000-\$75,000
- \$75,000-\$100,000
- more than \$100,000

B. How many staff does that budget cover? _____ full-time equivalent

C. What is the source (by approximate percentage) of your annual budget?

- ____ % state
- ____ % federal
- ____ % corporate
- ____ % foundation(s)
- ____ % dues
- ____ % donations
- ____ % grassroots fundraising (events, solicitations, etc.)
- ____ % other (Please explain)_____

Additional information or comments:

Again, thank you for taking the time to complete this detailed inquiry. The information you have provided here is vital for enhancing and building volunteer water quality monitoring programs in connection with Cooperative Extension across the nation.

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