

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring

University of Rhode Island

University of Wisconsin

FACILITATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this four-year National Facilitation project is to build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts across the country. The goal is to expand and strengthen the capacity of existing Extension volunteer monitoring programs and support development of new groups. The five primary objectives of the project are:

- Identify current Extension volunteer monitoring programs, with several exemplary programs highlighted as national models.
- Develop training materials to support and strengthen Extension volunteer monitoring efforts.
- Offer training programs to regional, state and local program coordinators.
- Develop and establish Internet and web-based tools for data management and networking for volunteer monitoring groups.
- Increase collaboration and cooperation with other agencies and programs through the establishment of a strong support system.

The facilitation project team anticipates working closely with the “406” Water Quality Programs to establish strong ties with state water quality coordinators. We see the Regional Conferences as an important venue for communication and training to state water quality coordinators and to Extension volunteer monitoring program coordinators.



EXTENSION VOLUNTEERS EDUCATE AND MOTIVATE CITIZENS FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Extension volunteer water quality monitoring programs have a unique capacity for capturing the excitement and attention of local communities. Through trained volunteers, these programs:

- heighten awareness of key local water quality issues;
- lead directly to voluntary adoption by citizens of recommended best management practices (BMPs) for water quality protection; and
- draw diverse audiences to other Extension water quality programs.

Extension volunteer monitoring programs have led to measurable improvements in local water quality. Furthermore, the capacity of Extension to deliver timely programs at the county, watershed and state levels is strengthened by Extension sponsored volunteer monitoring efforts.

A 1995¹ SNAPSHOT OF EXTENSION VOLUNTEER WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAMS

19 States
 29 Programs
 8,600 Trained Volunteers
 1,700 Lakes, Streams and Estuaries Monitored
 22,000 Wells in Rural, Suburban and Urban Areas
 514,000 Hours of Volunteer Time/Year
\$6,600,000 Contribution of Service/Year

¹ Grossman-Garber, D., L. Gould, L. Green, & A. Gold. 1997. Cooperative Extension Service Volunteers Educate and Motive Citizens for Water Quality Protection: The Role of Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs in the Cooperative Extension Service - Nationwide Assessment

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring CSREES National Facilitation Project



VOLUNTEER MONITORING EDUCATES THE COMMUNITY TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Volunteer water quality monitoring programs **create a two-way channel of communication** between the public and Extension. These efforts heighten the visibility and credibility of Extension education programs within the community. They involve a **wide spectrum of the community**, which in turn enhances Extension's ability to bring **local knowledge to diverse stakeholders**. Extension volunteer monitoring programs **encourage individual actions** to enhance water quality by providing pertinent, timely information on water quality issues.

VOLUNTEER MONITORING CREATES MULTIPLIER EFFECTS

Volunteer monitoring - like master gardening and soil and plant testing programs - strengthens the delivery of a state's overall Extension water quality program. The data are used by a wide array of federal, state, and local agencies, as well as by researchers and educators

Monitoring programs are steppingstones that broaden and deepen Extension's community involvement. They create "**multiplier effects**" as trained citizen volunteer monitors carry their knowledge, concern, commitment, and energy into other areas of their community's life.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROJECT PARTICIPATION

- Become a member of the national project steering committee. We are seeking representatives of "406" Regional Committees, major Extension volunteer monitoring programs and other volunteer monitoring programs.
- Nominate exemplary Extension volunteer monitoring programs.
- Invite us to provide training to your regional, state and local coordinators.

The project team is also looking for information about all current Extension volunteer water quality monitoring programs. We will be updating contact and other information throughout the 2000 - 2004 grant period.

If you would like to start a volunteer monitoring program within Extension we would also like to hear from you. **We will provide whatever assistance we can to help you grow your program.**

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