

Summary of results of spring 2005 survey regarding the Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation Project

In the spring of 2005, we conducted a survey of the Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation Project's (Project) listserv members and EPA's Volunteer Monitoring listserv to assess the success of the Project as related to

- Networking and communication tools that have been developed during the life of the Project
- Changes in participant knowledge, networking, attitude, or program coordination based on participation in a Project-sponsored training session or workshop
- Changes in knowledge about Extension Volunteer Monitoring Programs
- Development of partnerships, or expanded program offerings based on the Project's outreach, materials, and efforts in general
- The Project website
- The Project's Guidebook for Growing Programs
- Use of Project resources or staff for assistance

As of November 2005, there are 343 members of the Project listserv. Listserv members include State Extension Water Quality Coordinators, Program Coordinators of Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs, participants in all training sessions offered since the Project was initiated, and others who have asked to be added to the list who work or who have an interest in volunteer monitoring outside of Extension. Several have been added since the time the survey was distributed, but the majority were members at the time it was distributed. It is unknown how many individuals are members of EPA's listserv.

Forty people responded to the survey. Of those, many identified their connection to volunteer monitoring. Sixteen respondents were Volunteer Monitoring Program Coordinators; seven were State Extension Water Quality Coordinators, National Facilitation Project Coordinators, or Regional Liaisons; six were volunteer monitors; and six were other professionals who work in the realm of or network with volunteer monitoring professionals.

Eight of the sixteen respondents who indicated they coordinated volunteer monitoring efforts indicated they did this on a local level (as opposed to statewide or regionally). They were asked to define what they mean by "local". Five people indicated they coordinated efforts on a county or multi-county level, two indicated working on a watershed or multi-watershed (i.e., bay) scale, and one person indicated coordinating volunteer monitoring efforts for a municipality.

Length of Time

Thirty-five people responded to the question that asked how long they had been involved with volunteer monitoring. Most (18 people) indicated they had been involved for several years while just two indicated they had been involved for decades (Figure 1).

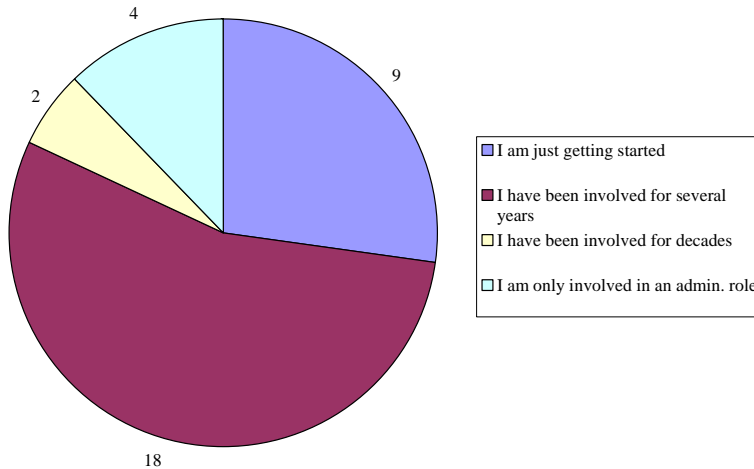


Figure 1. Length of time respondents have been involved with volunteer monitoring

How Respondents Had Heard About the Project

Most of the respondents (32 of 37 responding) had heard about the Project prior to being asked to complete the survey. These individuals were then asked to indicate specifically how they had heard about the Project and asked to check all options that applied. Most (23 of 32 responding) indicated that they had learned of the Project at a conference or workshop (Figure 2). This was followed by respondents having heard about the Project from State Extension Water Quality Coordinators and the Project website. Two individuals noted that they had learned about the Project through Gateway Community College in Arizona (one specifically mentioned Mario Casteneda).

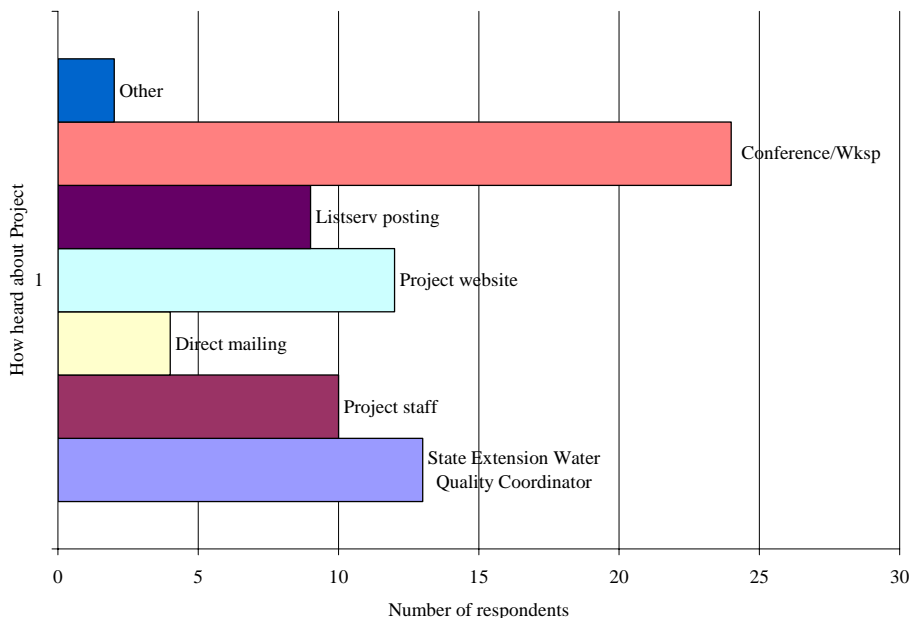


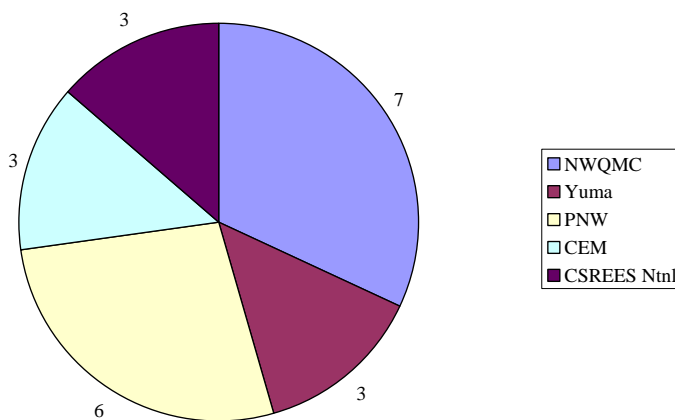
Figure 2. Respondents were asked to indicate how they had heard about the Project.

Through Which Listserv and Conferences Most Respondents Heard About the Project

Although only nine people responded to the question about through which listserv they had heard about the Project, five indicated the EPA Volunteer Monitoring listserv, one indicated EPA’s NPS listserv, one indicated the Project listserv, one indicated Arizona’s volunteer monitoring listserv, and one indicated hearing about the Project from a specific EPA employee (Sharon Collman).

Twenty-two of the respondents identified at which conference they learned about the Project. Most (7 people) indicated they had learned about the Project at the National Monitoring Conferences (Wisconsin and/or Tennessee). Six indicated learning about the Project at the Pacific Northwest training sessions. Three people indicated learning about the Project at each of the following conferences: the December 2004 Yuma, Arizona training, the November 2004 Citizens Environmental Monitoring (CEM) conference and national CSREES Water Quality Conferences (one person indicated 2005, the others had no year specified).

Number of respondents indicating at which conference they learned about the Project



Networking and Communication Tools

Since the Project was initiated, staff have developed a variety of networking and communication tools for Cooperative Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer water quality monitoring programs. Those completing the survey were asked to rate these Project-generated tools in terms of how they have benefited in regards to networking and communication between programs. In general, of those who were familiar with these Project tools, the majority felt they were good or very good (Table 1). The most highly rated network and communications tool was the Project website, with 11 individuals indicating it was very good and 10 indicating it was good. Only one person indicated that they felt the Guide for Growing programs was poor as a networking and communications tool.

Table 1. Project networking and communications tools were rated by respondents. Numbers of respondents rating each tool are indicated in the table.

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor	Have Not Seen
Project Listserv (CSREESVOLMON@lists.uwex.edu)	4	10	1	0	0	11
Website (www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer)	11	10	1	0	0	6
Guide for Growing Programs fact sheets	6	7	0	1	0	11
Volunteer Monitoring Workshops	9	5	3	0	0	12

As a result of workshop participation

To assess results of participation in a Project-sponsored workshop or use of any of the Project's communication tools, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with several statements about change in their knowledge, networking or program coordination based on that participation/use. Most of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement with all but one of the statements (Table 2). The statement with the highest percent agreement was "I increased my knowledge of volunteer monitoring program management", with 9 people strongly agreeing to the statement and 13 people agreeing to the statement. The statement with least agreement was "I initiated a new volunteer monitoring program", for which nine people were neutral, six disagreed, and two disagreed.

Table 2. Knowledge, networking, and program coordination efforts were assessed for those who had attended Project-sponsored workshops or used Project communication tools. Number of respondents indicating their level of agreement to each statement is indicated in the table.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I increased my knowledge of volunteer monitoring program management.	9	13	2	0	0
I networked with volunteer monitoring colleagues from other Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs.	6	10	5	0	2
I networked with colleagues from other agencies and volunteer monitoring interests.	7	12	4	1	0
I initiated a new volunteer monitoring program.	1	1	9	6	2
I view volunteer monitoring in a more positive light.	8	10	6	0	0

As a Result of the Project

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they had learned about Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs, developed partnerships, or developed/expanded volunteer monitoring opportunities in their area based on the Project as a whole. The largest number of respondents indicated having learned somewhat (8 people) or a great extent (11 people) about Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs (Table 3).

Table 3. Numbers of respondents indicating the extent to which they learned about Extension monitoring programs, developed partnerships, or developed or expanded volunteer monitoring opportunities in their area based on the Project overall are indicated in the table.

	Great extent	Some what	A little bit	Not at all	N/A
Learned about Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs	11	8	4	1	1
Developed partnerships with other volunteer monitoring interests (local state or federal agencies local citizens' groups etc.)	4	8	5	4	4
Developed partnerships with other Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs	4	4	7	6	4
Developed or expanded volunteer monitoring opportunities in your area	2	4	7	7	4

Project Website

Respondents were asked how often they visited the Project website. Of 27 people who responded to this question, most (14) responded that they visited it less than monthly. Eight indicated they looked at it weekly, 1 reported looking at it weekly (we should give this person a prize!), and 4 chose the other option which read, "You have a website?"

When asked to rate the usefulness of various sections of the website, the top three rated sections of the website were the Outreach Materials and Activities, Related Research and Educational Efforts, and Highlighted Program (Table 4). Another section of the website that one respondent listed as useful was the links page. Job postings and the *E. coli* Monitoring Project section of the website were the most often given N/A rating by respondents.

Table 4. Project website sections were rated for their usefulness to respondents. Numbers of respondents indicating usefulness of the website section are listed in the table.

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	N/A
Outreach Materials and Activities (including all Project presentations results of nationwide inquiry and training session materials)	7	11	1	0	5
Listing of and links to other Extension sponsored or co-sponsored volunteer monitoring programs	7	9	2	1	5
Related Research and Educational Efforts	5	11	2	1	5
Guide for Growing Programs	6	9	2	0	6
Highlighted Program	3	11	3	2	4
Job postings	2	6	5	2	9
Upcoming events' links	1	9	6	1	6
<i>E. Coli</i> monitoring project	5	5	1	1	11

Guide for Growing Programs

Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of the various sections of the Guide for Growing Programs. Although all sections of the Guide were indicated to be useful or very useful by the majority of respondents, "Why Monitoring Makes Sense", and "Building Credibility: Quality Assurance and Quality Control" were the most useful to respondents (Table 5).

Table 5. The various sections of the Guide for Growing Programs were rated for their usefulness by respondents. Numbers of respondents indicating level of usefulness of each section are listed in the table.

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	N/A	
Getting Started: Finding Resources in Guide	5	7		3	0	7
Why Monitoring Makes Sense	9	7		1	0	4
Designing Your Monitoring Strategy	4	9		4	0	5
Monitoring Matrix	4	9		3	0	5
Effective Training	6	9		3	0	4
Monitoring Equipment Suppliers	6	6		4	1	5
Monitoring Program Manuals (links)	7	7		2	2	4
Building Credibility: Quality Assurance and Quality Control	9	6		1	1	4

Overall Project

When asked if they would recommend utilizing Project materials and services, 14 respondents said they strongly agreed with the statement, and the other 10 who answered the question agreed with the statement. Similarly, everyone answering the question that asked if the respondent was satisfied with the support they had received from Project staff indicated they agreed or strongly agreed (6 strongly agreed and 11 agreed). However, it was almost split as to whether respondents had contacted Project staff for assistance with volunteer monitoring efforts in their area (9 people indicated they agreed and 11 indicated they disagreed with the statement).

Other comments

Several respondents took the time to add additional comments. Those have been included below in their entirety.

- The problem with websites, no matter how useful is that you have to be able to attract readers. I hope you have some sort of e-mail contact with Extension groups that keep them up-to-date on additions to the site. You are doing great work; I wish I used the information more. You might want to consider going to a HTML page before downloading the PDF part. Give you a chance to talk about the highlights of the section and they can download the material if they want. Downloading an 800Kb file on a telephone modem is time-consuming. PS. On at least one page the Link to the Secchi Dip-In takes you to National Monitoring Day.
- You are all doing a great job! Wish I had more time to take advantage of it all.
- I really enjoyed the workshop. I have been involved in trying to get more volunteer monitoring in Eastern Oregon, but not due to the Facilitation Project.
- I hope that the Project continues and that our statewide program in community-based water monitoring becomes more involved and informed through the Project. With reductions in funding from many State 319 programs and Extension Services/Systems, and a continued lack of awareness of or appreciation for water monitoring programs within Extension, we have a lot of work to do that can best be done together.
- I did the best I could to evaluate your site/program but keep in mind I have only visited it briefly. Unfortunately, I have very little time to look at other sites/programs. Its 10:00 on a Sunday night and I am working on e-mail! Finding volunteers is not a challenge; the challenge is keeping up with them. However, from what I have seen you are doing a great job! Keep up the good work!

- The workshops were great. I need to explore the website, materials, and use the list-serve. I believe this is the first contact I have experienced from the list-serve, excluding a follow-up from the water quality training conference.
- Keep up the good work and I will try to use your web site more in the future.
- Need to do awareness workshop to increase interest in volunteer training
- Since I'm once-removed from actual monitoring at this point, I'm not sure that my evaluation makes much sense to be combined with others.