



CSREES New England Region Water Quality Program

Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Cooperative Extension
in New England

- Research
- Education
- Extension

"The NERMC Benthic Macroinvertebrate Assessments course was instrumental in the formation of WPWA's macroinvertebrate volunteer monitoring program in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, RI. The materials from the course enabled me to locate and purchase monitoring equipment, train volunteers, and develop protocols that work well with my organization. Macroinvertebrate sampling is now a part of several studies that WPWA is doing."

Denise Poyer,
Program Director,
Wood-Pawcatuck
Watershed Association, RI

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Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring: II. New England Collaborations

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs within the CSREES New England Water Quality Program capture the excitement and attention of local communities and citizens and help communities make informed decisions to improve water quality. The network developed between these CSREES New England groups has enabled them to share resources as well as to learn and grow from each other's experiences.

Situation

Cooperative Extension volunteer water quality monitoring programs are thriving in New England. These long-lived programs have a unique capacity to educate and motivate citizens for water quality protection. Program volunteers seek to educate and empower themselves, their children, and their communities about water, as well as diagnose and improve polluted waters, and protect their high quality water resources. These programs seek to increase the use of locally relevant water resources data by decision makers, promote volunteer involvement in protecting and enhancing the quality of all water resources in New England, and develop and maintain regional and national partnerships for more effective and sustained solutions to long-term water quality and quantity issues.

Actions

Program coordinators are active locally and statewide as well as regionally and nationally, learning from each other as they seek to increase the capacity and expertise of volunteer monitoring programs throughout New England and the U.S. The New England Extension programs have a history of regional collaboration. Before the existence of the National 406 Water Quality



Program, the New England volunteer monitoring programs formed the New England Regional Monitoring Collaborative (NERMC, <http://www.nermc.org>) to coordinate the delivery of training and related services regionally. Volunteer water quality monitoring will play a key role in the Northern New England Lake Education and Action Project, a collaborative project between the Universities of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont funded in 2003 by CSREES.

The New England programs also participate and take leading roles in national programs, such as the National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC, <http://water.usgs.gov/wicp/acwi/monitoring/>) and the North American Lakes Management Society (NALMS, <http://www.nalms.org/>). The URI Watershed Watch Program and the University of Wisconsin Extension program are directing the National Facilitation of CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Efforts Project (<http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/>) designed to build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts across the U.S.



Training of volunteer monitoring techniques is greatly facilitated when program coordinators and volunteers attend regional Extension and NERMC workshops.

www.usawaterquality.org/newengland

Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring relates to CSREES National Themes:

Drinking Water and Human Health, Pollution Assessment and Prevention, and Watershed Management

For contacts go to: http://www.usawaterquality.org/newengland/newq_contacts.html

The CSREES New England Regional Water Quality Program works to improve water quality management through educational knowledge and extension programming that emerges from a research base. The program builds on the strengths of the Extension Water Quality Programs at the Land Grant Universities throughout New England. Partners in this regional program are equal opportunity providers and employers.

CSREES is the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, a sub-agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, and is the federal partner in this water quality program.

Impacts

- Extension volunteer water quality monitoring programs participating in NERMC have developed five assessment tools (<http://www.nermc.org>) that give water quality monitoring and watershed groups throughout New England the “big picture” and the “bottom line” on the ecological integrity of their watersheds and expand upon conventional water monitoring techniques.
- New Englanders have participated in a series of “train the trainer” workshops geared to provide hands-on training of the monitoring tools developed by NERMC. Individuals who participate in these workshops, including state and regional agency representatives, local conservation organizations and volunteer water quality coordinators and monitors, apply their learning by teaching others and conducting these assessments in their home watersheds.
- The National Facilitation of CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Project (<http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/>) has reported results from a 2001 inquiry to the 33 Extension-based volunteer water quality monitoring programs across the U.S. and developed a “Guide to Growing Programs”. As a result of this project, New England programs are sharing tools and learning from the strengths of similar Extension-based programs throughout the nation.
- Sponsor of North American Lake Management Society’s 2003 Annual International Symposium.

Partners

In addition to the support of CSREES and the national partnerships listed above, New England volunteer water quality monitoring programs have been facilitated through collaborations with numerous partners, including Sea Grant, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geologic Survey, various state agencies, conservation districts, local communities, local environmental and sporting organizations, Native American communities, lakeside residents and organizations, and watershed associations.



By sharing their techniques and strategies for keeping volunteers motivated enables New England Extension volunteer monitoring programs to thrive.



Collaborations between New England Extension volunteer monitoring programs allow program coordinators to learn new outreach tools to reach a wide audience of volunteers.