



## USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

### Enhancing the Use and Availability of Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Data in New England

Environmental decision making requires quality monitoring data, however resources are usually limited. New England's volunteer water quality monitoring programs have proven to be a cost effective means of gathering that information. Unfortunately, the water quality indicators often used to describe water resource conditions may not be fully understood and used by local decision makers in their efforts to restore and protect water resources locally. Volunteer monitoring offers a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between scientists and the public by not only allowing for the development of robust data sets on local resources, but also an educated constituency that is better prepared to explain complex monitoring information. Thus collaboration among volunteer monitoring programs, researchers, agencies and other Extension programs makes sense, and was the impetus for creation of the New England Water Program Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring focus area.

In April 2005, the Volunteer Monitoring Focus area hosted the *New England Monitoring Summit – Shared Waters* in order to advance the dialogue among agencies, volunteer monitoring program coordinators, and watershed organizations. Conducted in partnership with US EPA Region 1 and the New England Interstate Pollution Control Commission, the summit was a collaborative meeting of federal, state, and volunteer water quality monitoring partners intended to help identify potential approaches within the Northeast that lend themselves to developing a sustainable support system for volunteer monitoring.

One particular goal that grew out of that summit was strengthen the understanding and use of monitoring data through the development of more 'people-friendly' indicators of water quality through the enhancement of relationships between existing research and extension programs to share expertise and resources. This presentation will outline some of the steps being taken to advance those goals, and solicit the input of participants to ensure that we are incorporating the research and academic community in helping meet them.

Author: Elizabeth Herron

Coauthor(s): Linda Green (University of Rhode Island), Jeff Schloss (University of New Hampshire), Jerry Schoen (University of Massachusetts), Geoff Dates (River Network)

