



Building Credibility: The Key to Successful Volunteer Monitoring Programs

Monday January 29, 1-5 pm
2007 CSREES National Water Conference
Savannah, Georgia

Workshop Description:

Water quality monitoring data are typically gathered to support decision-making, whether it is for encouraging waterfront residents to convert lawns into vegetated buffers, for enacting local ordinances to strengthen wetlands protection or improved storm water management, or for regulatory action. In order to be useful, monitoring data must provide relevant information, *and* the data must be credible, which usually means that the information is documented and defensible.

This workshop will open with a discussion of the life cycle of volunteer monitoring programs (e.g., how and why programs form, how they grow and build credibility, and how they may end). This will provide participants a central platform from which to discuss various aspects of data quality. Components of this interactive workshop will include:

- an overview of quality assurance and quality control steps programs can follow to help substantiate the credibility of their data,
- a summary of existing data credibility laws, what these laws entail, and their potential impacts to volunteer monitoring programs,
- a compendium of volunteer vs. professional studies,
- case studies from a variety of projects in which volunteers assisted with data collection for scientific research projects, and
- discussions of data quality issues relevant to workshop participants.

This workshop will be geared toward not only volunteer monitoring program coordinators, but to anyone who may be interested in tapping into the vast wealth of water quality data available through, or working these citizen scientists.

Workshop Presenters:

Bill Deutsch and Laura Robinson, Alabama Water Watch

Linda Green, Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation Project and URI Watershed Watch

Elizabeth Herron, Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation Project and URI Watershed Watch

Jerry Iles, Ohio State University Extension

Kris Stepenuck, Volunteer Monitoring National Facilitation Project and Wisconsin Water Action Volunteers



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Workshop Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome & Introductions – Linda Green
- 1:30 Key elements for a successful long-term program: the Alabama Water Watch example– Bill Deutsch & Laura Robinson
- 2:00 Overview of quality assurance considerations for monitoring programs – Linda Green
- 3:00 Break
- 3:15 Introduction to data credibility laws & their impacts; Case study from Ohio -Kris Stepenuck and Jerry Iles
- 3:55 Volunteer vs. professional studies – Are we good enough? – Elizabeth Herron
- 4:15 Case studies of volunteers involved in research projects – Elizabeth Herron
- 4:35 Discussion of burning data quality/credibility issues – All
- 5:00 Adjourn