

Can a Portal for Water Quality Information Make a Difference?

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Biographical Sketch of Author

Beverly McNaughton is an environmental monitoring scientist in the Aquatic and Atmospheric Sciences Division of the federal Department of the Environment in the Pacific and Yukon region. She has been involved with the federal and federal-provincial water quality monitoring program and trend assessment network since 1990 working in partnership with the British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. She is currently working on a regional water quality website, through support from the Canadian Information System for the Environment that provides timely access to water quality data and information.

Abstract

The Department of the Environment and the British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection opened a portal for obtaining regional water quality data and information. The website provides information on the federal-provincial long term water quality monitoring network, as well as primer information on both the British Columbia and Canadian Water Quality Guidelines. The site also enables users to download and graph integrated water quality and water quantity data with user selectable guidelines.

For a decade, federal-provincial water quality data have been primarily used by government for decisions on watershed and water resource planning initiatives, formulation of guidelines and objectives, impact and trend assessments, state of environment reporting, loadings, detecting emerging issues and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and programs affecting watershed uses. The launch of a water quality website marks the first occasion where the general public will have timely access to federal-provincial water quality data, reports and program information. The recent development of web services enables our regional partners and interested community groups to interact and communicate within our website for data and information on demand.

Can this approach make a difference? Definitely! Through the use of the website, we are able to reach a broader and more diverse audience, while providing them with regional data and awareness of both regional and national water quality issues and concerns.