

USING THE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION OF NATIONAL MONITORING PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The dialog on public participation focuses on innovative methods to involve citizens in the consensus building process to help develop national and global policies. The combined input of science, technology and policy, created by a cross-section of representatives, can result in more realistic outcomes, while the use of science alone may result in over-simplified technical solutions and may not address community needs.

The Advisory Committee on Water Information and its subgroups are using the principles of open participation and inter-organizational collaboration to create products, and to pilot test and implement national programs to improve monitoring and assessment of water quality. These committees include representatives from Federal, state and local governments, scientific and academic institutions, water utilities, the private sector, academia, and the volunteer monitoring community – all working together to create collaborative approaches to improve water quality and water resource management.

The broad goals of the advisory process are to improve coordination among Federal agencies; share information with regional, state and local governments; increase collaboration with the private sector; and make water data and information more accessible and useable by watershed and volunteer monitoring groups. These goals are achieved using public-private partnerships to increase communication, share scientific and technical data and information, create publicly accessible databases and user guides on the web, and design and implement improved monitoring networks.

Special projects are focusing on the impacts of water quality on watersheds and ecosystems from upland to coastal waters and out to the ocean, at regional and national scales; and on the design of coordinated and comparable monitoring networks for both surface and ground water. Results will enhance the ability of Federal and state program managers to more effectively monitor these important water resources. Innovative approaches for communications, including web conferencing, list serves, wiki sites, and Cooperative Research and Development Agreements, help participants from diverse organizations and locations share data, information and resources while preparing technical plans and documentation for use by water resources managers.

KEYWORDS

water quality, water information, public participation, public-private partnerships, communication, information sharing, technology transfer.