

NJ Watershed Watch Network: A Collaborated Effort Between the Volunteer Community and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection

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Biographical Sketch of Author

Danielle Donkersloot is Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. She graduated from Stockton State College in 1998 with a degree in Environmental Studies. She is currently working at facilitating interaction between the volunteer monitoring community and the NJDEP and has been working on creating the Watershed Watch Network.

In 2000, Division of Watershed Management hired her as the Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Northeast Watershed Region. Her duties included: training volunteers, coordinating and presenting workshops, writing and editing for 5 watershed newsletters, GIS mapping coordinator, and facilitating watershed area meetings. She began working for the NJDEP, Endangered and Nongame Species Program, in 1999, where she worked on the Statewide Osprey Survey.

Abstract

Over the past year, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program has been remodeled to establish consistency across the state in terms of who is collecting data and for what purpose. This presentation will discuss the approach that is being used in NJ to collect and use volunteer data. The presentation will include a description of the four-tiered approach to volunteer monitoring: Tier A-Environmental Education, Tier B-Stewardship, Tier C-Community and/ Watershed Level Assessment, Tier D-Indicators/Regulatory Response. Each tier has a specified data users group, data uses and data quality requirements. This will allow for volunteers to collect data that is acceptable to the NJDEP standards, and provide volunteers with a process for submitting data. This presentation will also discuss the collaboration effort between the NJDEP and volunteer monitors throughout the state by using two advisory committees and the Office of Outreach and Education. The Internal Advisory Committee consists of water quality data users and water resource managers throughout the NJDEP. This committee has a vested interest in being able to insure the level of quality assurance needed for data collection, which varies from low to high levels of rigor. The second committee is the Watershed Watch Network Council, which consists of volunteer monitoring representatives throughout the state. Their programs vary from tidal, freshwater, chemical, visual, habitat, and biological, and are customized to their watershed's needs.

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