

Enhancing Collaboration & Increasing Capacity in Extension Volunteer Monitoring Programs

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Biographical Sketches of Authors

Linda Green is Project Director for the National Facilitation of Extension Volunteer Monitoring Efforts project. She is also Program Director of the seventeen-year old URI Watershed Watch Program, a part of the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension Water Quality Program, and has been since its inception. She is the Volunteer Monitoring Representative on the NWQMC and co-chairs its Collaboration and Outreach subcommittee. She is a member of the editorial board of *The Volunteer Monitor* newsletter.

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Abstract

In this presentation we will share what we have learned in our efforts to enhance collaboration & increase capacity in Extension volunteer monitoring programs. Extension is involved in water quality research, education, and outreach throughout the nation, regionally to locally, and in environments rural to urban. Extension brings university science to the community and community concerns and local knowledge to the university. Volunteer water quality monitoring is a growing focus of Extension water quality programs.

We staff a national USDA-CSREES project, *National Facilitation of Extension Volunteer Monitoring Efforts*, that is building a network and comprehensive support system for Extension-affiliated volunteer water quality monitoring efforts throughout the country. Our goal is to expand and strengthen existing programs and support new ones in a collegial and collaborative manner. Our flagship website (<http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/>) lists all Extension volunteer monitoring programs and contains results from an extensive inquiry of these programs. Our "*Guide to Growing Programs*" has modules on program design, training techniques, quality assurance, volunteer support tools, outreach tools and funding- with special emphasis on materials that are available through existing monitoring programs. Regional and statewide workshops educate, motivate, and encourage those newly involved, revitalize long-term efforts and encourage new directions and activities. Communication and collaboration among programs are definitely leading to success in overcoming institutional obstacles. By linking with Extension, both professional *and* volunteer water quality monitoring programs can gain support in their efforts to educate the public, encourage citizens to adopt "water-friendly" behaviors, and solve environmental problems.