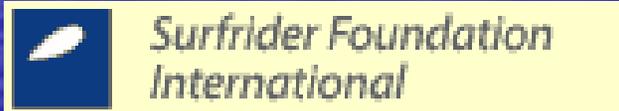


# Experiences in Volunteer Monitoring

By

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Surfrider Foundation, Santa Cruz  
& Aquatic Protection Agency



# Experiences in Volunteer Monitoring

- Who is Surfrider?
- Who is Aquatic Protection Agency?
- My involvement with both organizations
- Benefits of using volunteers
- Challenges of using volunteers
- How we face those challenges
- Science/Experiments



Surfrider  
Foundation

# Who is Surfrider?

Protecting Our Beaches For Over 20 Years

- **Mission Statement** *-The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education.*
- **Blue Water Task Force**
  - *Water Quality Monitoring*
  - *Storm Drain Stenciling*
  - *Beach Clean-ups*
- **Water Quality Monitoring**
  - *Test the local beaches for indicator bacteria each week*
  - *We test up to 30 beaches per week in Santa Cruz County*



# Aquatic Protection Agency



*Keep Oceans Blue*

- **Mission Statement-** *The mission of the Aquatic Protection Agency is to protect our fragile marine ecosystems through prevention of toxic pollution which harms our environment. We protect our oceans through education, outreach, research and development, and in-field programs which detect and eliminate illegal toxic pollution.*
- *Vessel Monitoring*
- *Point Source Investigations*
- *California Coastline Survey Project*



# My involvement – Eric Russell

- Surfrider Foundation, Santa Cruz Chapter
  - Lab Director, past 5 years
    - Built and updated bacteria lab
    - Manages the volunteer samplers
    - Performs weekly water analysis
- Aquatic Protection Agency
  - Co-founder and Executive Director
    - Founded in 2001
    - First organization to successfully monitor moving cruise vessels



# Benefits of volunteer monitoring

- Costs are kept lower than paid staff
- Community involvement
  - Volunteers spread the word while taking samples
  - Beach Captains tend to take ownership of the beach, cleaning it up as well
- Education benefits
  - Get students involved to inspire stewards of the next generation
  - Sponsor Science Fair projects to raise community awareness
- You can hit 30 beaches in one day at the same approximate time



# Challenges with Volunteer Monitoring

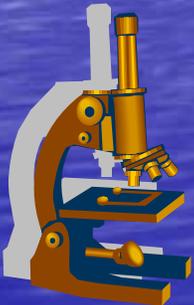
- Maintaining data integrity
  - Site analysis and location maintenance
  - Procedures and training issues
- Reliability in gathering samples can be low
  - Some weeks I'll have 30 samples, others only 3
- Keeping volunteers inspired long term



*"I don't have to go out to the beach today to gather samples. It's raining outside and I am just a volunteer."*

# How we face those challenges

- Maintain Data Integrity
  - Use GPS to mark sites where samples are gathered
  - Get volunteers to write a description of their exact location they grab the sample
  - Ask them to take a few pictures of the access and any references if they have a digital camera
  - Pay attention and look for volunteers who might need retraining
    - Forgetting sheets constantly
    - Sloppy paperwork
    - They take a lot of “time off” and sporadically deliver samples



# How We Face Those Challenges

- Reliability in gathering samples can be low
  - Establish a back-up sampler who can cover for vacations, sick days, etc...
  - Contact your samplers 3 days before the sampling date to check if they will be gathering samples that week
  - Make sure your volunteers feel proud about their work. i.e. motivation by inspiration

# How We Face Those Challenges

- Keeping volunteers inspired long term
  - Volunteer recognition
    - Surfrider Swellebration
    - Awards(volunteer of the year)
    - Camping trips
    - Newsletter articles
  - Make Volunteering fun
    - Social events
    - Build a team



# Science and Experiments

- Challenge the testing method to understand it
  - Run samples, and break procedure until you see a noticeable difference
  - Perform experiments on the methods
    - U/V testing- samples below the surface
- Science Fair Projects
  - I work with local schools and act as science advisor for science fair projects
    - Example: Wetlands project 2006



Thank you

