

GET CONNECTED TO THE NETWORK – COMMUNICATING YOUR RESULTS

Tony Williams

Director of Monitoring Programs

The Coalition for Buzzards Bay

620 Belleville Avenue

New Bedford, MA 02745

Phone: 508-999-6363 x 203

Email: williams@savebuzzardsbay.org

ABSTRACT

The condition of water resources isn't likely to improve if your monitoring efforts aren't connected to the local networks - either specific audiences or the general public. Monitoring may be rooted in one or many objectives, and an important consideration is to make your communication and outreach efforts framed for engagement, rather than solely the dissemination of results. We often say we are doing outreach and education with the goal of promoting public awareness (and understanding) of the science findings of our monitoring. To do this many organizations and institutes have developed web-based outreach projects, mostly for providing general information about monitoring efforts. The Coalition for Buzzards Bay's monitoring program has launched a new interactive water quality website geared at displaying our findings and providing the public with easily accessible information on the state of water quality in the Bay's harbors, rivers and coves.

Our monitoring program's main task has been collecting data on excessive nutrient inputs from land use and then reporting on these impacts, such as changes in habitat health and water quality along the coastline. The program is recognized regionally for providing water quality data to both local and state environmental managers. While the monitoring data reveals the effects of nutrient pollution (eutrophication), management solutions are often challenging because of the widespread distribution of sources- stormwater runoff, septic systems, sewage treatment facilities and agricultural practices. This program's success relies in getting citizens involved with monitoring as a cost effective alternative when other resources are absent. However, future success will depend on moving past the objective of monitoring long-term trends and focusing more on getting connected to the local network for collaboration and coordination of the management and restoration of the Bay's resources.

KEY WORDS

communication and outreach, promoting awareness, getting involved with monitoring, management and restoration

INTRODUCTION

Tony Williams is the Director of Monitoring Programs for The Coalition for Buzzards Bay. The Buzzards Bay Citizens Water Quality Monitoring Program or *Baywatchers* began in 1992 in Southeastern Massachusetts and is one of the largest coastal monitoring programs in the state. For 16 years a trained group of 130+ volunteers has been monitoring 200 sites in the harbors and coves of Buzzards Bay. The focus is to better understand the Bay ecosystem and its response to human-related impacts, specifically nutrient pollution. Each year the organization works to strengthen its data sharing capabilities as well as approaches to turn the results into planning and management actions for protecting Bay resources.