River Watch's Evolution Over the Past 20 Years

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Outline

- The history of the River Watch program and its goals
- Reasons for 20 year longevity
- Innovative elements
- What to avoid
- Creating measurable results
- Questions

The River Watch Mission

Clean water for all!

We work towards that by.....

River Watch Goals

Two Goals:

1.) To provide a hands-on experience for individuals to understand the value and function of the river ecosystem

2.) To collect quality aquatic ecosystem data over space and time to be used for the Clean Water Act and other water quality decision-making processes.

- Baseline data on rivers for decision making processes

Why was River Watch created?

- There was a void in data (only WQCD collecting this type of baseline data)
- Decisions being made on one data point or no data
- Data gap and need for restoration of watersheds
- No other entity collecting baseline data – statewide, routinely (WQCD/USGS)
- Barb Horn heard her calling!

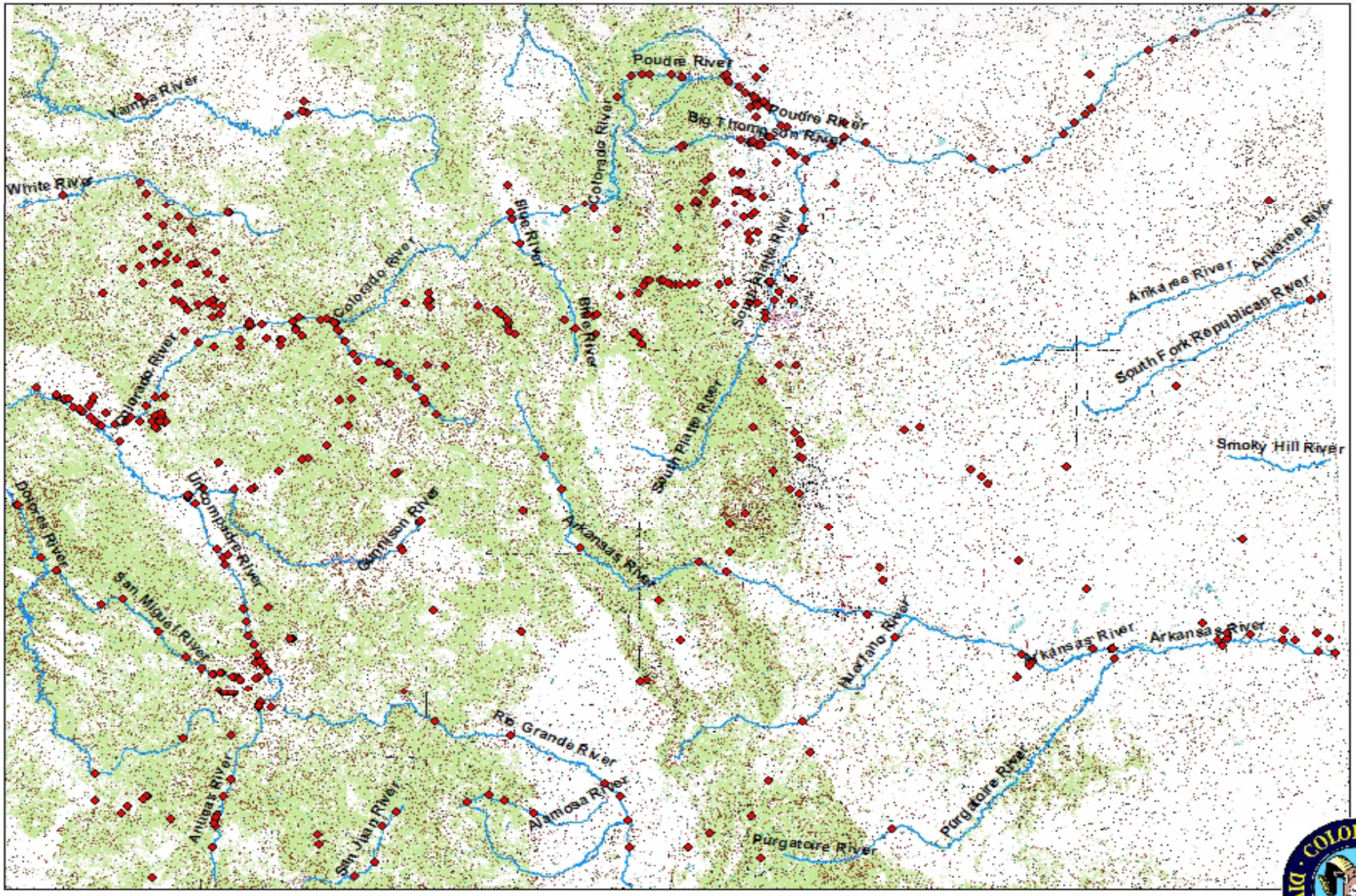
River Watching Since 1989: Modest Beginnings

- 6 Schools
- Limited Focus
- One Staff
- A lot of Drive and Determination

River Watch Today

- Over 70,000 People Reached
- 900 Stations, 400 water bodies on Record
- Chemical, Biological and Physical Monitoring
- Over 4,000 samples per year
- Second Largest WQ Database in Colorado
- Largest Statewide Volunteer Monitoring Program in USA

RIVER WATCH - ACTIVE STATIONS



Miles

0 25 50 100 150 200

1:2,650,000

Spatial Reference: UTM_NAD27_Zn 13N

February 4, 2009

Longevity

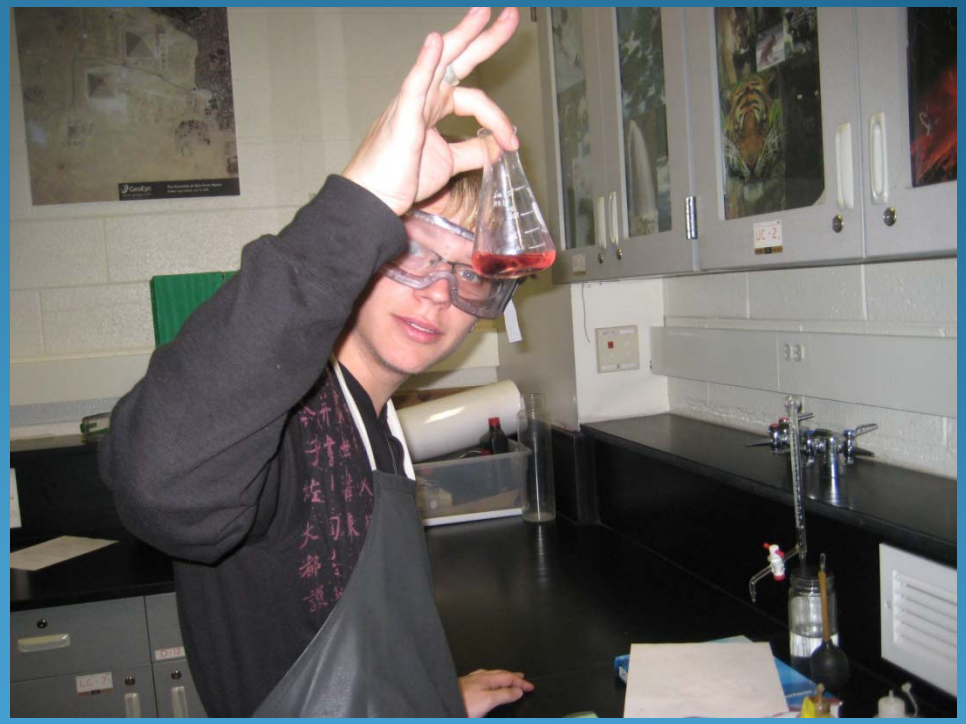
- DOW support of RW
- Stable funding
- Statewide in focus, treat all groups same
- Understand the information needs of our target audience (WCCD) staying relevant.
- Stay true to core values

Longevity

- Consistent staff to see long term vision implemented
- Ability to say no, reclaim unused equipment, target quality volunteers
- Quality training, quality data
- Data is real and being used
- Collaboration and partnerships built on common ground

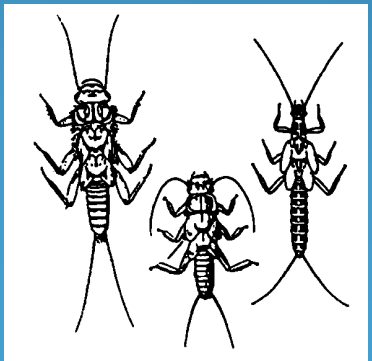
Innovation and Successes

- One teacher, two student training model
- All validated data that passes qa/qc is in one database
- Four day training model, pay to participate



Innovation

- Bugs collected by volunteer but ID'ed by taxonomist
- DOW's research laboratory leveraged for laboratory analyses
- WSG that teach CWA and how to interpret data ?
- The cost difference between RW lab and commercial lab
- Demand from WSG



What to avoid

- First training model failed – go to volunteer train for 2 hours quickly morphed into 4 day training, bring teacher and student model
- Nutrients – first tried to have volunteer do analyses, had severe time and money limitations
- Many issues in data management
- Paying students to sample in the summer
- Poorly designed partnerships with adult organizations

Measurable Results

- Groups have used RW as match in 319 NPS projects and other grant sources
- Data used in watershed planning, source water protection plans
- In some areas RW is only data monitoring pre/post reclamation efforts or data necessary to document a problem
- Help groups evolve to more sophisticated monitoring programs with USGS, EPA and others

Measurable Results

- Data dumps to WQCD and WQCC (CWA implementers in state) to determine impairment.
- Many students receive college credit, service learning credit or other benefits for participating
- Go on to study and work in water related fields
- Teacher experiences

Questions?