

Session J1: Strengthening Monitoring Programs through Nonprofit / Nonprofit Collaboration

Room A105
1:00 – 2:30 pm

0214
J1-1

Benefits and Challenges of Creative Partnerships to Monitor River Restoration Projects

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River restoration project leaders often struggle to secure the financial and technical capacity to conduct good, long-term monitoring that effectively documents success (or failure) in improving water quality or habitat. As budgets shrink, these challenges only loom larger. Project leaders use a variety of approaches to attempt to ensure efficient, effective monitoring, including: conducting the monitoring themselves, using volunteer monitors, partnering with state or federal agencies and others.

Our presentation will draw from two pools of experience to document the pros and cons of different partnership approaches: our own work with Learning Labs and a survey of River Network Partners.

The first thread of information will be drawn from our experience with Learning Labs. River Network partners with organizations in select watersheds to focus funding, skills, and learning around particular river issues. The projects are designed to create lessons learned that can both make a difference in the targeted watershed and provide replicable models for restoration efforts all around the country. The targeted watersheds are known as “Learning Labs.” We are experimenting with several different monitoring approaches and partnerships in these Labs, and will use those efforts as case studies of successes and challenges.

The second thread of information will draw from a survey of our Partners and others. River Network Partners include watershed organizations; statewide river groups; local, state and federal agencies; and others. The survey will provide data to: 1.) identify the partnership approaches used to monitor water quality and habitat improvements as the result of projects, 2.) analyze the pros and cons of different approaches, and 3.) identify the most successful types of partnerships for various types of projects. Follow up interviews will be conducted with selected respondents.

Our presentation will summarize: the pros and cons of various partnerships approaches; case studies for the key approaches; critical factors in establishing a successful partnership; and advice on how watershed groups, state agencies and federal agencies should translate the lessons learned into creating the right approach for their needs.

0234
J1-2

A Watershed Project of a Different Color: A Cooperative Monitoring and Stewardship Project between the Springfield Public Schools and the McKenzie Watershed Council

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For 12 years, the Springfield Public School’s WELL Project (Water and Energy Learning Lab), the McKenzie Watershed Council (MWC) and local public utilities has been conducting long-term water quality monitoring in the McKenzie Watershed. The operation of the program is unique in many aspects including the collaborative approach between partners, funding sources, staffing and the student selection and retention process. The goals of the program include; 1) provide students with research opportunities around water related resources in their community, 2) produce consistent, high quality data that can be used by local utilities and conservation organizations, 3) foster connections to the community in order to develop cooperative and voluntary restoration projects. The program is designed to overcome some of the reservations associated with water quality data collected by students by developing QA/QC protocols used by other professionals. These include the use of blind samples, correction blanks to insure accuracy and split samples analyzed by professional labs. Students are selected through an application process, receive in-depth training and participate in the program for the vast majority of their tenure at high school. This level of commitment ensures that students have a high degree of fidelity to our procedures and are able to recognize values that may be erroneous or outside the normal expected values. Another key component contributing to the success of the program is annual dedicated funds by the Springfield Utility Board to support the assignment of a full-time position within the school district as the WELL Project coordinator. These funds also support the equipment expenditures, supplies and transportation cost associated with the program. The program is supported by additional funds and the

assignment of the project coordinator of the MWC. We recently completed a 3-year basin-wide study of Camp Creek that examined the relationship between land-use patterns and its impact on surface and groundwater resources. Teams of students collected data on surface water chemistry, residential well water, macroinvertebrates and in-stream and riparian habitat. Data from the project was used to identify and prioritize restoration opportunities and served as an outreach tool to private landowners.

0351
J1-3

Unique Partnerships in Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring: Successes and Challenges from a year as an AmeriCorps VISTA as the link between Colorado Trout Unlimited and Colorado River Watch

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Colorado River Watch is a statewide volunteer water quality monitoring program operated by the nonprofit 501(c)3 Colorado Watershed Assembly in cooperation with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife whose mission is to work with voluntary stewards to monitor water quality and other indicators of watershed health, and utilize this high quality data to educate citizens and inform decision makers about the condition of Colorado's waters.

Founded in 1969, Colorado Trout Unlimited is the state's leading nonprofit, non-partisan organization providing a voice for Colorado's rivers. As the financially self-sustaining, grassroots, Colorado-based arm of the national organization Trout Unlimited, Colorado TU works with and through 23 local chapters in communities across the state. Their vision is to ensure that robust populations of native and wild coldwater fish once again thrive within their original Colorado range for future generations to enjoy.

Individually, the two groups have had great success with monitoring, reclamation, and education. Despite their successes both groups recognized that forming a strong and permanent partnership could be extremely beneficial for the organizations, their members, and Colorado's rivers. In 2011, the two groups created an AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA position through the Western Hardrock Watershed Team to serve as a tangible link between the two groups working exclusively on strengthening the partnership in hopes that the two organizations could experience greater successes through the partnership.

The session will focus on the three stages of the partnership: the formation of the partnership, the evolution of the partnership and where it is today, and the direction toward which the partnership is moving. The first section will explain a brief background of the organizations, and how their missions fit to allow a joint AmeriCorps staff member. The presentation will then move to the impact that this partnership has had on water quality in the past year. Finally, we will close with how this partnership could expand and leverage assets for each organization around the common aspects of their individual mission and purpose. The object of this session is to inspire a conversation about what partnerships, if any, would be beneficial to your organization and its mission.

0575
J1-4

Ozarks Water Watch Project

Susan Higgins

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David Casaletto, the new Executive Director of Ozarks Water Watch Foundation (OWW) has a goal of building partnerships with other non-profits and agencies. This year, David has built some unprecedented partnerships to obtain data for the Upper White River Basin.

In the past, Ozark Water Watch produced their Status of the Watershed report for the Upper White River Basin using data collected by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and science faculty from the University of Arkansas and Missouri State University. However, obtaining this data was expensive and limited the number of sites they could monitor. Casaletto began looking for ways to increase the number of sites in order to get a comprehensive view of watershed health. Holly Neill of the Missouri Stream Team Watershed Coalition (MSTWC) has just finished compiling the State of the Streams report using macroinvertebrate data collected by Stream Team volunteers.

Having been a volunteer with Lakes of Missouri Volunteer Program (LMVP) for years, Casaletto began to explore the idea of using volunteers to gather the data needed in the Upper White River Basin. Not wanting to reinvent the wheel, Casaletto saw a perfect fit

with the Stream Team Program. Casaletto and Neill met with Stream Team program staff about recruiting volunteers to monitor in the Upper White River Basin for OWW. Volunteers will follow a sampling calendar throughout the recreational season and will also collect grab samples for nutrient analysis in addition to regular Stream Team volunteer monitoring methods. The LMVP lab will do nutrient analysis for the project. Casaletto and Neill scheduled a meeting with DNR to see what their volunteers could do to fill information gaps for the department. After meeting with Water Protection Program staff, Neill and Casaletto learned that the department needs data on high flow events to reveal what is entering the stream from non-point sources. This year OWW, MSTWC, LMVP, Stream Teams, Table Rock Lake Water Quality, Missouri Department of Conservation and Missouri Department of Natural Resources are partnering toward a common goal.