



## 2014 VISION AWARD

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council's Vision Award recognizes a monitoring council or group that has demonstrated extraordinary vision and cooperation in the field of water quality monitoring on a local or regional level to enhance the management and protection of aquatic resources

This year, we are pleased to announce that Florida LAKEWATCH, a highly successful volunteer water quality monitoring program begun in 1986 through the University of Florida, is the winner of the Council's Vision Award.

**Florida LAKEWATCH** exemplifies the University of Florida's land-grant ethic of promoting teaching, research, and outreach/extension with the goal of collecting credible data on Florida's aquatic systems (primarily nutrients, chlorophyll and water clarity). LAKEWATCH represented a new and creative approach to water resources monitoring and management on a local/regional and statewide level. Public interest and involvement in the program grew to such a degree that the Florida Legislature officially established Florida LAKEWATCH in 1991 and provided an annual appropriation to operate the program.

Since the program's inception and continuing through the present, thousands of LAKEWATCH volunteers have collected reliable long-term water quality data on more than 1100 lakes, 175 coastal sites, 120 rivers and 5 springs in 57 Florida counties. For long-term trend analyses, LAKEWATCH provides at least 20 years of monthly data on 27 lakes and 15 years of monthly data on 195 lakes. Currently, LAKEWATCH analyzes approximately 45,000 samples each year. All of these data are placed in EPA's STORET data management systems and on the Florida LAKEWATCH web site where they are available for anyone to use.

Monitoring with LAKEWATCH volunteers is cost effective, and requires a lower level of Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA-QC) than is required for setting standards or mitigation by Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). However, comparison studies have shown that the data collected by volunteers and processed by LAKEWATCH staff are equivalent to data collected and processed by Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) professionals under strict QA-QC procedures. These comparison studies allow FDEP to use LAKEWATCH data for the following regulatory decisions:

1. Development and implementation of numeric nutrient criteria for proposed water quality standards;
2. Impairment assessment of surface waters;
3. Development of Total Maximum Daily Loads; and,
4. Development of Basin Management Action Plans.

Over the last 25 years, Florida LAKEWATCH staff and other scientists have used LAKEWATCH data to publish over 40 peer-reviewed scientific publications and three books that expand the limnological knowledge-base for Florida. Florida LAKEWATCH has also cooperated with scientists from around the world in Spain, Denmark, Canada, Finland, and elsewhere by sharing data for comparative ecological studies. These efforts have helped maintain a strong state, national, and international research component.



# Working Together for Clean Water

9TH NATIONAL MONITORING CONFERENCE



April 28 - May 2, 2014



Cincinnati, Ohio



During its existence, LAKEWATCH staffers have mentored over 35 graduate students, all of whom received degrees in the lake management field. LAKEWATCH staff also support and mentor undergraduate students in hands-on lake research and management activities.

Each year LAKEWATCH staff conduct approximately 20 regional meetings at different locations throughout Florida that all volunteers are invited to attend. At these meetings, LAKEWATCH staff give detailed analyses of each volunteer's data, and this analysis is returned to the volunteers to prepare them to answer questions on aquatic ecology that may arise.

Many publications and other information generated by the program to promote the science-based management of Florida's aquatic resources, such as the Florida Lake Region Classification System, are available for free on the LAKEWATCH web site (<http://lakewatch.ifas.ufl.edu/LWCIRC.HTML>).

The success of LAKEWATCH could not have been accomplished without contributions from numerous scientists, staff, and volunteers. However, it takes leadership to bring together such a diverse group, to grow a program and keep it vibrant and pertinent, and to maintain sources of funding. The leadership provided by Mark Hoyer, Director of LAKEWATCH, has enabled this important and valuable program to thrive. Join me in congratulating Mark Hoyer and all the staff and volunteers of Florida LAKEWATCH.

