

## Abstracts

Wednesday, April 30

### Session H2: Monitoring Councils and Coalitions: Examples and Lessons

1:30 – 3:00 am | Room 262

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#### ***The Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership: A Forum Regional Coordination***

**Gretchen Hayslip<sup>1</sup> and Jennifer Bayer<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>US Environmental Protection Agency, Seattle, Wash., <sup>2</sup>US Geological Survey, Cook, Wash.

##### **Abstract**

Federal, state, tribal, local, and private aquatic monitoring programs in the Pacific Northwest evolved independently in response to different organizational and jurisdictional mandates and needs. To enhance efficiency and effectiveness of their monitoring efforts, the Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP) provides a forum that supports collaboration and coordination among organizations and across jurisdictions. PNAMP consists of federal, tribal, and state partners from both fisheries and water quality agencies; other interested participants; and a coordinating staff. Activities are conducted by participant working groups and teams as endorsed by the partner-based steering committee. PNAMP receives significant policy support and direction by member organizations, commitments of technical resources and staff time and funding for the coordination itself.

Topics of interest to partners include monitoring methods and design; the management and exchange of data; status and trends and species abundance distribution; and habitat assessment (with emphasis on review of methods across monitoring programs). To sustain the results of our collaboration and assist practitioners, PNAMP has developed online resources to create a network of information and tools to support many facets of monitoring. PNAMP's [www.MonitoringResources.org](http://www.MonitoringResources.org), available free online, is intended to promote better documentation and enable more efficiency in collaboration and data sharing between programs and includes PNAMP's protocol and methods library, a community forum, Sample Designer, monitoring Site Manager, Monitoring Advisor, and data management resources. All tools and resources are available via the web and could be used to support monitoring in other regions of the country. PNAMP is seeking to collaborate with additional partners and at scales beyond the Pacific Northwest.

#### ***Measuring the Effectiveness of California's Water Quality Monitoring Council***

**Jon Marshack**

*California Water Quality Monitoring Council, Sacramento, Calif.*

##### **Abstract**

In December 2010, in response to state legislation and a formal agreement between the state's environmental protection and natural resource management agencies, the newly formed California Water Quality Monitoring Council delivered its recommended Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy for California. The strategy was mandated to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's water quality and associated ecosystem monitoring, assessment, and reporting through increasing collaboration between a myriad of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that currently monitor California waters. The Council's strategy focuses on delivering water quality and ecosystem health information to decision makers and the public through a set of theme-specific internet portals. Each portal is developed by a collaborative workgroup composed of stakeholders with specific expertise in a particular theme. "Is it safe to swim in our waters?" "Are our wetland ecosystems healthy?" These portals bring together data and information in a readily understandable manner that directly addresses users' questions. In order to design, construct, and maintain these portals each workgroup is challenged to review existing monitoring and assessment efforts, data management procedures, and web reporting technologies and to make specific improvements. To succeed, the workgroups endeavor to standardize methods and procedures only to the degree necessary to deliver data and information to the user.

The Council's enabling legislation requires that the Secretaries of California's environmental protection and natural resource management agencies conduct a triennial audit of the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Monitoring Program Strategy. The time for that audit is now. Mainly through grass-roots efforts convincing individual stakeholders that it is in their own best interest to invest in collaboration, the strategy has made considerable progress. Newly standardized procedures are poised for the first time to be able to determine the extent and health of California's wetlands and changes over time. Clean Water Act water quality assessment and impaired waters listing procedures now benefit from improved synchronicity of available data, data integration, and communication. The audit will answer fundamental questions: Are users satisfied with access to data? Are we better able to answer key management questions? Have these improvements allowed better use of data in management decisions?

## ***Partnerships for Communication and Cost Savings***

**Carrie Ruhlman**

*North Carolina Division of Water Resources, Raleigh, N.C.*

### **Abstract**

With over 63,000 miles of streams and 260,000 acres of freshwater lakes in North Carolina, the Division of Water Resources (DWR) lacks the means to characterize all waters of the State, as required by Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act. To address this issue, North Carolina supports a monitoring coalition program by which NPDES permittees voluntarily partner with the DWR, stakeholders and each other and engage in basin-wide water quality sampling that provides high-quality data and other tangible benefits to all parties.

North Carolina has seven monitoring coalitions in five of its river basins. In addition to water quality monitoring, coalitions address watershed-based goals, such as TMDL compliance, nutrient reduction, stream restoration and non-point source pollution identification.

For members with NPDES permits, the DWR waives their individual in-stream monitoring requirements in exchange for participation. For other members, the program provides the opportunity to participate in watershed management with minimal financial investment. The Coalition Program produces quality ambient data that are readily available in a consistent electronic format. The data are used by both coalition members and the DWR for compliance assessment, trend analyses, modeling, planning and permitting.

Coordination of the Program is performed by a single DWR position, serving as a liaison between the coalitions and the DWR. This position facilitates the collection and reporting of water quality data at over 260 monitoring locations on a monthly basis, in accordance with each individual coalition's Memorandum of Agreement.

The DWR utilizes coalition partnerships to meet the challenges of improving communication, expanding monitoring coverage, maximizing limited resources and bolstering confidence in monitoring methodologies and water quality data. Cooperative monitoring encourages productive working relationships and ownership of one of the State's most valuable resources...its water.

## ***The Evolution of the Virginia Water Monitoring Council: Becoming a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization***

**Chris French<sup>1,2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Virginia Water Monitoring Council, Blacksburg, Va.,* <sup>2</sup>*Filtterra Bioretention Systems, Ashland, Va.*

### **Abstract**

The Virginia Water Monitoring Council (VWMC) began in 1999 as a collaborative network of interested government, nonprofit, and private entities that had an interest in promoting and coordinating water quality monitoring efforts throughout Virginia. The VWMC has operated as a loose-knit organization since its inception, following guidelines and operational procedures. However, like many volunteer led efforts, the VWMC has been challenged with resource constraints.

This presentation will provide a review of key historical organizational objectives and discuss the current effort to transition the VWMC into a recognized 501(c)(3) organization. VWMC products and program outcomes will be discussed as well as the organization challenges that led the VWMC leadership to determine that becoming a non-profit professional organization was necessary in order to maintain and grow the organization's capacity.