



National Water Quality Monitoring Council

Working together for clean water



Meeting Minutes – National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC) Web Meeting September 25, 2017

(Agenda and list of participants on pages 4-5, presentations posted on Council website at: <http://acwi.gov/monitoring/>)

Actions, Decisions and other Information

1. **Decision:** Upon a motion duly made (Mary Skopec), seconded (Danielle Donkersloot), and carried, the April, 2017 Council Web Meeting minutes were approved and will be posted to the website.
2. **Update on the DOI FACA Review:** Wendy Norton updated the group on the Department of Interior (DOI)'s review of Federal Advisory Committees (FACAs), including the Action Committee on Water Information (ACWI). At the beginning of the review, DOI decided to suspend all activities of Advisory Committees, which led to cancelling all NWQMC activities including meetings and webinars from mid-May through September 1, 2017. The review is still currently underway, but we have been given approval to get back to work. Wendy does not know when the review will be completed.
3. **Collaboration and Outreach (C&O) Work Group** –Candice Hopkins and Danielle Donkersloot presented on recently restarted outreach and collaboration activities. The C&O Work Group is actively working on updating the state and regional monitoring councils' webpage based on content from multiple locations on our website. With the resumption of ACWI activities, we are restarting our webinar series. We have one speaker currently scheduled and are currently looking for other topics and speakers. Our newsletter is currently in draft and should be distributed before the end of October. Martha Clark Mettler suggested that we help compile and archive field photos of water quality monitoring; the group will discuss this at the next meeting.
4. **Training and Certification Subgroup:** Aaron Borisenko reviewed the Project Plan for the Certification and Training project. The group has not met since resumption of Council activities but plans to meet on September 28. The group previously designed a survey about curriculum and trainings that would be relevant; this needs to be revised but will be sent to the Council soon. The group plans to present the results from the survey to the Council sometime this winter.
5. **National Assessment Subgroup:** Larry Willis, the subgroup's lead, has changed roles at his organizations. We need a new leader for this subgroup to move this project forward.
ACTION: Candice will send out a call to the Council to look for a new lead for this workgroup
6. **Volunteer Monitoring (VM) Work Group:** Danielle Donkersloot gave an update on the Volunteer Monitoring Work Group. Members of the group attended the Citizen Science Association meeting in May, 2017; they plan to attend and help support the next Citizen Science Association Meeting (March 13-16, 2019). The work group lined up several webinars throughout the summer (hosted through Izaak Walton League) and they hope to add additional webinars to the Council's webinar schedule this fall with a focus on state uses of VM data and how to build credibility in VM programs. As always, the group is looking to connect with additional VM groups and to develop webinars to answer questions people may have about VM data and its uses. The next VM Work Group meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 30th at 2:00 pm ET.
7. **Methods Board and Sensors Work Group:** Dan Sullivan updated the Council on recently restarted activities of the Sensors Work Group and Methods Board (see presentation "Sensors poll"). The Sensors Work Group hosted a webinar before the NWQMC shut down, and they would like to schedule another webinar. The group will need to decide if they would like to continue their work for aquatic nuisance species decontamination procedures. Dan attended the USGS continuous sensors meeting and thinks some of the topics brought up at that meeting could become topics for the work group. Dan also reviewed conclusions from the Sensors Poll that was distributed to NWQMC members and others; there seems to be a lot of interest in remote sensing and new collaboration opportunities.

8. **Biological Comparability and Assessment Subgroup:** Dan Sullivan reported that the group hasn't met since April. The first calls involved getting people together from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and United States Geological Survey (USGS) and looked at commonality between biological databases. The group is looking to reschedule meetings and start up again.
9. **National Network of Reference Watersheds (NNRW):** Mike McHale gave updates on recent progress on the NNRW. Mike recently submitted a white paper to his supervisor that describes what the NNRW is, what has been done to date, and plans for the future. Mike has also established contact with the Forest Service and is trying to connect data from Forest Service watersheds into NNRW; he is going to continue to work with his contacts at the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP) meeting in October. Mike will also work with the NADP to incorporate total deposition estimates into NNRW and is contemplating how to incorporate uncertainty estimates with these data. The Council's NNRW group has yet to meet and Mike will try to get a group together to help him with NNRW efforts.
10. **Water Information Strategies (WIS) Work Group**—Mary Skopec said that the WIS group will be meeting on October 4th to restart activities.
11. **Water Quality Standards Subgroup:** Chris Greene presented on Water Quality Standards Subgroup that will be meeting in the near future. While the Council was on hiatus, Chris worked on a white paper for guidance that would be useful for interpreting monitoring data. Chris hopes to produce a product that users of monitoring data can use as an intro to types of guidance that are available.
12. **Water Quality Portal Metadata Standards Subgroup:** Jeff Thomas said there has not been much activity with the group since the Council was on hiatus. He got in touch with Laura Shumway and is trying to help decide what role the NWQMC should have with increasing metadata standards in the Water Quality Portal.
13. **Increasing Data Submission Subgroup:** Mary Skopec asked Laura Shumway how data submission to the Water Quality Portal has been going. Mary suggested an annual update on how many records exist and who is submitting data. Laura said she is working on a dashboard that shows how many people are submitting and using data. Danielle Donkersloot said there is a big effort to create the pathway for empowering water monitoring citizen scientists and volunteer monitors to help publish their data, exchange their data and communicate their data in a way that further engages their local community to conserve and protect water resources. There are many tools, many technologies, data systems, data platforms and so on, but the volunteer monitoring community on a whole either doesn't know the tools exist, don't see the value in sharing and exchanging data or don't know how to access and use these tools or those tools are still out of their reach. A group including Danielle Donkersloot, Barb Horn, Dwane Young, and Jerad Bales are exploring ways to solve some of these issues so the volunteer monitoring community can not only collect data and publish their data through either WQX or a local data exchange system. They also identified low-cost data communications tools (visualization, graphics, etc.), and are looking to engage the critical mass to support this initiative.
14. **Evaluate Progress Subgroup:** Mike Higgins reported that the Work Group will schedule a meeting soon. He reviewed the matrix that they developed to measure the progress of various NWQMC functions and how functions will be ranked by the group.
15. **National Monitoring Conference:** The 2018 National Monitoring Conference (NMC) will be postponed due to delays caused by the DOI review of ACWI. Two main options were discussed: (1) partner with another existing conference, which would save significant amounts of logistical planning, or (2) postpone the NMC until a later date, such as Spring of 2019. Jeff Schloss suggested we could partner with NALMS in October of 2018 as one option; he also offered to consider potential availability for Kansas City, Albuquerque, and Salt Lake for Spring of 2019. Additional complications that need to be factored into our planning effort include a DOI spending limit of \$100,000, which would essentially allow only about 50 people to attend from USGS and other DOI agencies. Various NWQMC members offered their opinions and preferences for moving the conference, including going to smaller, regional meetings that would emphasize training so more state agency folks could attend, but the group did not come to a consensus approach on how to move forward in the 40-minute time slot allotted.
ACTION: Candice will poll all members about their preferences for moving the NMC and the Steering Committee will make the decision regarding which option(s) should be pursued for our next conference.
16. **NWQMC Federal Member Round Robin**

NWQMC representatives gave short updates on news and developments from their organizations, specifically with any outlooks for the new fiscal year.

- Marie DeLorenzo reported that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric (NOAA) is still in a period of transition after the change in administration. NOAA has been under reorganization and several offices in different geographic regions have experienced reorganization.
- Mike Higgins said the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is also undergoing much uncertainty as there is currently no permanent director. Leadership at USFWS was affected by a shakeup in senior executive service. At the time, there are travel restrictions in place and few people can travel unless they are presenting at a meeting.
- Alan Ellsworth said the National Park Services (NPS) is facing the same uncertainty as other federal agencies. The NPS is currently waiting for a director to be appointed. The focus coming out of the DOI Secretary's office is on aquatic invasive species, such as quagga zebra mussels, and trying to keep these invasive species from spreading, as well as promoting fishing. The NPS is trying to tap into using smartphones and citizen science to identify biota that shouldn't be in an area.
- Erich Emery said the Corps of Engineers also are seeing travel restrictions. He emphasized that employees would be much more likely to be able to attend a meeting or conference if training was offered.
- Mike Eberle said the Forest Service is also experiencing budget cuts in the time of transitioning management. The new federal budget looks like it may have additional funding set aside for firefighting, which may free up additional funding for the water program.
- Gary Rowe reported that the USGS Water Mission Area will have a new organizational structure starting October 2. In addition the entire Bureau is also being reorganized internally to better meet the needs of Department of Interior. In both cases, existing funding programs, such as the National Water Quality Program (which oversees the NAWQA Project, NADP, and the National Park Service Cooperative Water Partnership), and the broader USGS Mission Areas, will remain largely intact. Budget-wise the FY18 House Mark restored many significant cuts put forth in the FY18 President's budget but our final appropriation remains uncertain.

17. Technical Presentation

- Jim Kreft and Laura Shumway presented to the group on recent progress on the Water Quality Portal (WQP, see presentation "NWQMC_2017_WQP_Presentation"). The presentation focused on describing the WQP and its benefits, as well as recent additions to the WQP. Additions to the WQP include new services, searchable site pages, and an upstream-downstream tool. The WQP team also formed a communications plan (see "draft_formal_comm_plan") for conveying the importance and accessibility of the WQP. The group will continue to develop additional tools for the Portal, and wants to work with the Collaboration and Outreach Work Group to help improve communications.

MEETING AGENDA

Monday, September 25, 2017

Time (EST)	Topic	Duration	Speaker
11:00 AM	Welcome and Introductions	5	Susan Holdsworth and Gary Rowe
11:05 AM	Council Business: Approve of April 10th minutes	5	Candice Hopkins
11:10 AM	Update on ACWI and Council Business	15	Gary Rowe, Wendy Norton, Susan Holdsworth
11:25 AM	Collaboration and Outreach Training and Class Series Project Team National Assessment Subgroup	10 10 5	Candice Hopkins and Danielle Donkersloot Aaron Borisenko Larry Willis
11:50 AM	Volunteer Monitoring	15	Danielle Donkersloot and Julie Vastine
12:05 PM	National Network of Reference Watersheds	15	Mike McHale
12:20 PM	Sensors and Methods Board Biological Assessment and Comprability Subgroup	15	Dan Sullivan
12:35 PM	BREAK	10	BREAK
12:45 PM	Water Information Strategies WQP Metadata/Data Quality Increasing Submission to WQP Subgroup Evaluate Progress Water Quality Standards	15 5 5 5 5	Mary Skopec and Aaron Borisenko Dan Sullivan and Jeff Thomas Jane Caffrey Mike Higgins and Leslie McGeorge Chris Greene and Monty Porter
1:20 PM	National Monitoring Conference Update	40	Jeff Schloss
2:00 PM	Round Robin: Federal Outlook	20	Federal Representatives
2:20 PM	Technical Speaker: WQP Updates	30	Jim Kreft, Laura Shumway
2:50 PM	Other business, next meeting	10	Candice Hopkins
3:00 PM	Adjourn Meeting	5	Susan Holdsworth and Gary Rowe

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