Connecticut River Fish Tissue Collaborative Study

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Ms. Card serves as Director of Water Quality, overseeing NEIWPCC's water quality, wetlands, and watershed programs including the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and the Connecticut River Fish Tissue Study.

From 1998-2002, Ms. Card worked as an Environmental Analyst with NEIWPCC. As program manager for the nutrient criteria and wetlands programs, she organized workgroups of appropriate state and federal staff to coordinate water quality policy efforts. She continues to manage several projects and workgroups that develop information to influence policy.

Ms. Card holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, with minors in Environmental Conservation and Business Administration, from the University of New Hampshire.

Abstract:

The Connecticut River Forum was convened by NEIWPCC in 1996 to organize water quality information and enable state, federal, and nonprofit organizations to discuss the River's management. Fish tissue contaminant surveys were assessed and found to be outdated and inconsistent with respect to sampling procedures; including sampling season, species, fish preparation, analytical methods, data analysis and resultant fish consumption advisories. Whether contamination levels had improved or shifted to different reaches of the River was unknown.

The states in the Forum agreed a collaborative fish tissue contaminant survey would serve as the first of a series of collaborative monitoring efforts. Federal agencies were invited and actively participated.

Establishing multiple objectives was necessary to gain the interest of monitoring partners along the 410 miles of the River. The River was divided into eight reaches, within which five 3-fish composites of three resident fish species were collected. Both fillets and offal were analyzed for mercury, various PCBs, dioxin, and chlorinated organic pesticides.

One anticipated outcome is a consistent contaminant dataset that will enable the four States' Health Departments to issue coordinated fish consumption advisories within their respective jurisdictions. Although analysis of the data is preliminary, it appears that there is a decreasing trend in organic contaminant tissue levels and an increasing trend in total mercury tissue levels from the mouth of the River up to the headwaters. This presentation will emphasize collaboration needed to enable this study, including agreement on monitoring objectives, strategy, QAPP, constituents to be analyzed, and data analysis and presentation.