

## **"Monitoring for Action"**

**Elizabeth Herron, Linda Green and Arthur Gold; University of Rhode Island  
Kris Stepenuck and Robin Shepard; University Wisconsin**

Elizabeth Herron has been with the URI Watershed Watch program, the largest volunteer water quality monitoring program in Rhode Island, for a decade helping expand the number and types of sites monitored as program coordinator. Linda Green has been program director for URI Watershed Watch since it began, providing both a strong scientific and personal foundation. Arthur Gold was one of the founders of the URI Watershed Watch program, and serves as the Water Quality Program Coordinator for URI Cooperative Extension. Kris Stepenuck is program coordinator for the WAV program (Water Action Volunteers) a statewide program helping citizen's to learn more about and protect the waterways of Wisconsin. Robin Shepard is Water Quality Program Coordinator for the University of Wisconsin Extension, and helps lead the WAV program. Together, this group is developing a comprehensive national support network for Cooperative Extension-based volunteer water quality monitoring efforts as part of a national facilitation project.

It has been said that, "[water quality monitoring] volunteers want and need to make a difference." Therefore, many volunteer monitoring programs spend a significant amount of time and effort getting their message to decision makers, stakeholders and the general public. And because so many of these efforts are directed toward the local community - where the decisions that have the most direct impact on water resources are often made - their hard work can reap tremendous rewards. Technological advances have expanded the diversity and range of tools used by organizations, and in some cases the effectiveness. However, it shouldn't be forgotten that "talking to your neighbor over the back fence" often gets the best results.

This presentation will share some effective reports, newsletters, websites and other data presentation tools and strategies used by Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service - associated and other volunteer water quality monitoring programs to get policies implemented, best management practices installed, and streams cleaned up. We will highlight some successes, as well as some less successful endeavors, and try to provide some hints for getting the public to understand your message.

## **"Effectively Working with Volunteer Monitors"**

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Volunteer monitoring programs most often start when citizens seek information about a body of water with which they are concerned – whether it is a local lake, stream, estuary, or personal drinking water well. When individuals discover that insufficient data exist about the waterbody they know and love so well, they often turn towards agencies and environmental organizations for technical advice on how to determine the health of their water. By effectively working with these citizen scientists, the reach of monitoring efforts can expand significantly.

This poster will challenge the idea of simply "using" volunteers as though they were "just another tool". By focusing on case studies and success stories, primarily from Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service - associated programs, it will demonstrate how to effectively collaborate with concerned and active citizens to gather much needed information. The basics of what goes into a successful volunteer monitoring program, as well as how agencies can work with existing programs for mutual benefits will be the focus of this poster.