



National Water Quality Monitoring Council

Working together for clean water



Meeting Minutes – National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC) Web Meeting December 11, 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

- Decision:** Upon a motion duly made (Mike McHale), seconded (David Chestnut), and carried, the September 25, 2017 NWQMC Web Meeting minutes were approved and will be posted to the website.
- 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), via email. The review is still underway, and we do not know who is conducting the review or what aspects of the advisory committees they are examining. However, Don Cline (USGS Associate Director for Water) briefed the acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science about ACWI activities during November and reportedly received an enthusiastic response. The 2017 Annual ACWI meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 17-18, 2018 in Reston, Virginia.
- National Monitoring Conference:** The 2018 National Monitoring Conference (NMC) has been postponed due to delays caused by the DOI review of ACWI. The Steering Committee discussed possibly combining conferences with another group but decided that there was no clear objective for combining, so we would host the meeting on our own in Spring of 2019. We have sent an announcement out to our audience notifying them of the change in date. Jeff Schloss is currently looking at potential venues in Denver, Colorado that would accommodate our group in Spring of 2019 since this would allow for more local federal attendees to join the meeting.
Lareina Guenzel led a conversation about the conference planning process and needs for the conference planning committee (see presentation "[Planning the 2019 Conference](#)"). The co-chairs of the 2019 NMC revised the timeline for the upcoming conference; the call for abstracts will be sent in March of 2018, and due in early September of 2018. Jeff Schloss gave an overview of the conference layout and explained that we are expecting about 500 people. Several Council members contributed suggestions for the conference layout, such as holding fewer concurrent sessions, hosting training after the closing plenary, and having a strong web presence for the conference.
ACTION: Jeff will send out our current list of topics for the 2019 NMC; Council members should provide feedback on any topics that may lend themselves to trainings and add any topics they may think are missing.
- Collaboration and Outreach (C&O) Work Group** –Candice Hopkins and Danielle Donkersloot presented on outreach and collaboration activities. The webinar series is going well and had over 450 people attend the last webinar on multivariate statistics. There are speakers scheduled through February, 2018 on a variety of topics. The newsletter publication was delayed so that we could announce the postponement of the National Monitoring Conference. The C&O Work Group is working on starting a photo archive but has run into issues with DOI Social Media and hopes to resolve these soon. Candice and Danielle emphasized the importance of all members sharing or presenting about the NWQMC and the Water Quality Portal (WQP) at meetings and conferences they are attending already and have several materials to send to members for outreach.
- Training and Class Series Subgroup:** Aaron Borisenko presented the results from the Training and Class Series survey that was sent in November, 2018 (see presentation "[TCS Survey Presentation Final](#)"). Responses to the survey varied based on people's backgrounds and visions, but the group now has a clear vision about desired trainings and classes to offer to the NWQMC audience. The next steps are for the subgroup to review the results, develop a list of prioritized recommendations, and bring it to the Council.

6. **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.
7. **Volunteer Monitoring (VM) Work Group:** Danielle Donkersloot updated the Council on recent Volunteer Monitoring Work Group activities. The Work Group met on October 30th and had some new members that joined the phone meeting. They discussed the 2019 NMC and how to get as many people from the volunteer monitoring community at the conference as possible. Kris Stepenuck is currently updating the Volunteer Monitoring Directory and the group will help with this effort. The VM Work Group will be sponsoring a webinar in January about building credibility in VM programs.
8. **Methods Board and Sensors Work Group:** Dan Sullivan updated the Council on recently restarted activities of the Sensors Work Group and Methods Board. Dan has been working on a survey that the Sensors Work Group distributed about a year ago; the takeaway is that there's a big need for training. The group will host a webinar in January that will address fouling with scientists from Georgia and Virginia. There was a call last Monday that was led by Lori Sprague about coordinating national monitoring networks; the next step is to scope out an issue paper and bring it to the Council for feedback and see if people are interested in pursuing this project.
9. **National Network of Reference Watersheds (NNRW):** Mike McHale gave updates on recent progress on the NNRW (see presentation "[McHaleNNRWUpdate_12112017](#)"). Mike attended a fall meeting with the National Atmospheric Deposition Program and generated some interest in the NNRW; at this meeting, he also discussed including some Forest Service Priority Watersheds in the NNRW. Mike has also had meetings about developing a new version of the Hydrologic Disturbance Metric and developing some R scripts to pull and process data from the WQP and add them to the NNRW. Susan Holdsworth asked if the R scripts that Mike has been working on could be shared, and he said that is possible. After Leslie McGeorge brought up some issues with finding reference conditions for the National Aquatic Resource Survey (NARS) project, Mike mentioned he wants to revamp the core watersheds component of NNRW to do a better job of refining reference watersheds.
10. **Water Information Strategies (WIS) Work Group**—Mary Skopec and Aaron Borisenko said that the WIS Work Group's efforts on fact sheets are still underway. They are going to revisit the timeline for future fact sheets so they will have more completed by the 2019 NMC. They are also going to reprioritize and look at new topics for fact sheets.
11. **Water Quality Standards Subgroup:** Monty Porter said that the subgroup is working to develop a variety of one-page fact sheets about water-quality standards. The previous focus of the group had been on human health and safe drinking water programs and criteria. However, they want to expand the focus to include clean water act programs, and link back to monitoring and assessment. They want to investigate anti-degradation policy in the nexus of monitoring and standards. Development of one-pager to talk about how aquatic life criteria are developed, binomial assessments. The group would like to meet again in January.
12. **Water Quality Portal Metadata Standards Subgroup:** Jeff Thomas said the bulk of the effort of this group has been coordinating with Laura Shumway and the group does not want to redo what her metadata team is already doing. Laura has been talking about future directions of working with the Council on this effort.
13. **Evaluate Progress Subgroup:** Mike Higgins said they have had problems scheduling a meeting but hope to have a call this week. They will be working with other work groups to identify the effectiveness of efforts and gather success stories. The group wants to assess the impact of Council efforts on people outside of the council and reflect on how things have changed in the past 12 years.
14. **Water Quality Portal Update:** Jim Kreft gave an update on the WQP. There are many products that are being released that use the portal. Jim compiled a [list of research products](#) that utilize the WQP and it shows continued use and growth of the Portal. The WQP will be adding additional query parameters, such as the ability to query by HUC-12s. Candice Hopkins will join the WQP Team and will serve as a joint product owner of the WQP. Council members asked about the ability to share various R scripts and where to share those scripts. Jim said there is space to think about compiling R scripts, and a logical place to put all of them would be a dedicated page on GitHub.
15. **NWQMC Regional State Member Round Robin**
NWQMC representatives gave short updates on news and developments from their EPA Regions.

- Chris Bellucci (EPA Region 1) said the region will host the 42nd meeting of the New England Association of Environmental Biologists (<http://www.neaeb.org>) in the Spring. The region has been reviewing projects that the regional monitoring network currently has and are assessing projects focused on lakes and streams to get a regional look at water-quality. A publication describing the stream project is available [here](#). Region 1 has a cyanobacteria workgroup and is working on managing cyanobacteria and informing the public. The group meets twice a year, and released a mobile app called BloomWatch that collects information on bloom photos and locations.
- Leslie McGeorge (EPA Region 2) said she will be attending the New Jersey Monitoring Council on January 24th and is looking for ways to help with NWQMC outreach with this group. Region 2 is working on CyanoHABs and is adopting a strategy for response that is currently used by New Jersey which includes a website for an online reporting form for HABs (Harmful Algal Blooms) and a department hotline. New Jersey also recently acquired a drone that has hyperspectral imaging capability and will hopefully help them to find phycocyanin in coastal waters. The USGS also released [a new report](#) about long-term trends in nutrients at 28 sites in New Jersey.
- Larry Willis (EPA Region 3) said that Region 3 is planning a regional biologist meeting. He plans to represent the Council at this meeting. Region 3 states are participating in a regional monitoring network that has been a good program. There are two major natural gas pipelines getting ready to be constructed in the region, so states are working with USGS to fund monitors at important stream crossings; they will use NARS physical habitat techniques to set a baseline for sedimentation in primary stream crossings.
- Dave Chestnut (EPA Region 4) reported that South Carolina brought Georgia's Adopt-a-Stream program into the state and it has been successful so far. Current efforts include training volunteers and trainers.
- Tim Asplund (EPA Region 5) said the region hosted a workshop about a year ago and talked about lake bio-indicators and where various states and tribes were at in the context of how the region may use the upcoming lake assessment to leverage potential monitoring. Conclusions out of the meeting were to make use of aquatic macrophyte data from 2012 NARS, and make sure data was analyzed as a lake-wide biological indicator. The regional monitoring network discussions have included stream networks and lake networks and have been in communication about what's been happening in the Northeast. HABs and cyanobacteria monitoring is of interest to the region and they are tracking blooms on national level. Ohio recently updated their ambient monitoring strategy for rivers and streams.
- Monty Porter (EPA Region 6) reported they have had successful region-wide meetings. They are working to develop a regional group that will meet monthly. Region 6 is looking at developing rules and monitoring strategies for produced water from oil and gas wells and water reuse rules. New nutrient criteria are in development in Oklahoma and New Mexico for lakes and flowing waters respectively. 3 states in the region are currently updating their biological criteria. The last big meeting the region had was the ATTAINS meeting which discussed the inclusion of tribal data into regional monitoring efforts.
- Liz Smith (EPA Region 7) recently attended the Region 6/7 ATTAINS workshop. Region 7 is ramping up work on monitoring for the regional monitoring network. Iowa is looking at how or whether to support a volunteer monitoring program in the state.
- Jeremy ZumBerge (EPA Region 8): Wyoming is eight out of ten years into their monitoring strategy. They are starting to develop their next ten-year monitoring strategy. Wyoming is 5 years into data collection to support nutrient criteria for the eco-region as well as for reservoirs and the draft criteria are out in draft form. HABs are another emerging issue and Wyoming is coming up with an action plan to use data to inform a public notification process.
- Aaron Borisenko (EPA Region 10) recently attended a Northwest Chapter of the Society of Freshwater Science in Washington. The group is concerned about thermal refugia for salmon species in the Northwest and discussed the

use of a biotic ligand model for metals toxicity. Oregon is going to have a regional monitoring summit that deals with the mid- and north-coast region of Oregon and will try to gather different stakeholders in the region.

MEETING AGENDA

Monday, December 11, 2017

Time (EST)	Topic	Speaker
11:00 AM	Welcome and Introductions	Susan Holdsworth and Gary Rowe
11:05 AM	Council Business: Approve of September 25th minutes	Candice Hopkins
11:10 AM	National Monitoring Conference Update	Jeff Schloss, Tim Oden, Lariena Guenzel, Marie DeLorenzo
11:50 AM	Collaboration and Outreach Training and Class Series Project Team: Survey Results National Assessment Subgroup	Candice Hopkins and Danielle Donkersloot Aaron Borisenko Need new lead for this group!!
12:35 AM	Volunteer Monitoring	Danielle Donkersloot and Julie Vastine
12:55 PM	BREAK	BREAK
1:05 PM	National Network of Reference Watersheds	Mike McHale
1:20 PM	Sensors and Methods Board	Dan Sullivan
1:40 PM	Water Information Strategies WQP Metadata/Data Quality Increasing Submission to WQP Evaluate Progress Water Quality Standards	Mary Skopec and Aaron Borisenko Dan Sullivan and Jeff Thomas Jane Caffrey Mike Higgins and Leslie McGeorge Chris Greene and Monty Porter
2:15 PM	Round Robin: State Representatives	State Reps
2:55 PM	Other business, next meeting	Candice Hopkins
3:00 PM	Adjourn Meeting	Susan Holdsworth and Gary Rowe

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