NWQMC
NATIONAL WATER QUALITY MONITORING COUNCIL
Working Together for Clean Water

National Water Quality Monitoring Council

Collaborative Partnership for Water Quality Monitoring

Introduction

The National Water Quality Monitoring Council (Council) provides an opportunity for the monitoring community to develop consensus-based approaches and tools for monitoring and reporting on water quality. The Council promotes partnerships that foster collaboration, advance the science, and improve management of our water resources. The Council strives to represent the full range of the monitoring community.

Council Mission

Provide a national forum to coordinate consistent and scientifically defensible methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting.

The Challenge of Multi-Agency Monitoring

Each year government agencies, industry, academia and private organizations devote enormous amounts of time, energy, and money to monitor, protect, manage, and restore water resources and watersheds. Differences in project design, methods, data analysis, and data management have often made it difficult for monitoring information and results to be shared and used by all. The restoration and protection of water quality is dependent upon detailed, understandable, and easily accessible data and information.

Responding to the Challenge: The National Water Quality Monitoring Council

The Council provides guidance and technical support for voluntary implementation of actions that advance the science of monitoring. This is best accomplished in an arena of collaborative and coordinated efforts communicated to all interested parties. In sum these actions will ultimately improve water quality monitoring. The Council encourages use of metadata, lab accreditation, methods documentation, and other procedures that contribute to the broadest possible acceptance, sharing, and use of water quality data. The Council promotes effective communication of monitoring results and findings to decision-makers and the general public. In some cases, Council work groups develop tools and techniques. Examples of these are the National Environmental Methods Index and Water Quality Data Elements. In other cases, the Council provides a venue for wide-ranging discussion and dissemination of new methods and technologies developed by others through its Web site and at its National Monitoring Conferences.

Membership and Organization

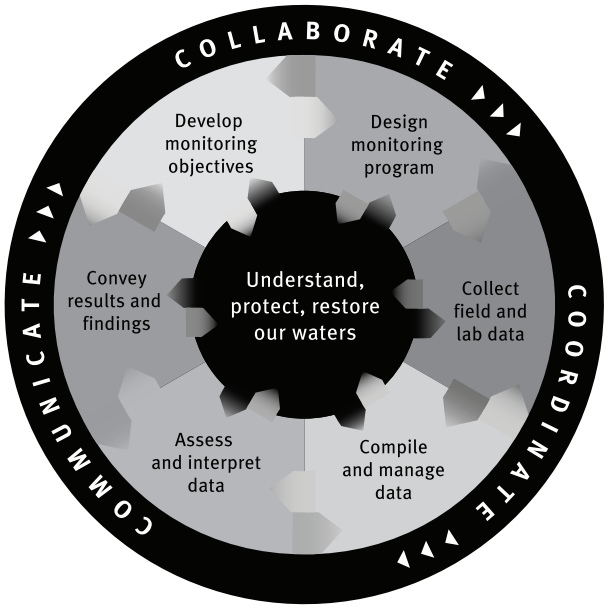
The Council was created in 1997 as a vehicle for bringing together the diverse expertise, skills, and talents needed to develop collaborative, comparable, and cost-effective approaches to water quality monitoring. The Council's 35 members represent the monitoring community: federal, tribal, state, interstate, local, and municipal governments; watershed and environmental groups; the volunteer monitoring community; academia; and the private sector including the regulated community. These are organizations that collect, analyze, interpret, disseminate, or use water quality monitoring information as well as those that develop monitoring technology, guidelines, and/or standards. The Council is co-chaired by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Council reports to the Advisory Committee on Water Information that operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Council Work Groups

- **Water Information Strategies** defines and promotes goal-oriented monitoring by proposing strategies for network design, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting results in support of the information needs of water quality management.
- **Methods and Data Comparability Board** provides a forum for exploring, evaluating, and promoting methods that facilitate collaboration and further comparability among water quality monitoring programs.
- **Watershed Components Interactions** provides an improved understanding of the factors affecting water quality within watersheds. The group assesses how these factors interact to develop effective monitoring strategies.
- **Collaboration and Outreach** works to build partnerships that foster collaboration among the many elements of the water monitoring community, particularly by supporting the development of state and regional monitoring councils, and promoting the importance of monitoring for decision-making.

A Framework for Monitoring

The Council, with broad and significant input from the monitoring community, has developed a pictorial framework for monitoring that shows the components of the monitoring process (as a series of interlinked cogs) needed to understand, protect, and restore our water resources. Incorporating the components of this framework into monitoring projects will improve monitoring efforts, results, and communication of information.



See Council Fact Sheet "A Framework for Water Quality Monitoring" and the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) IMPACT, September 2003 issue, Vol. 5, No. 5.

Council Activities and Products

The Council has taken a number of steps to encourage the water quality monitoring community to integrate the components of the monitoring framework into their efforts. The following examples of Council activities and products showcase efforts to improve data comparability and reliability as well as to foster institutional collaboration:

- Organizing and sponsoring biennial **National Monitoring Conferences** since 1998; each conference attended by more than 400 active participants representing a wide spectrum of the monitoring community. These conferences provide a national forum to present and explore methods and strategies for improving water quality monitoring, assessment, and reporting as well as presenting specific ways to foster collaboration and coordination.

To participate in the National Monitoring Conference, visit:
http://www.nwqmc.org

- Providing guidance and support for **State and Regional Water Quality Monitoring Councils** *(see Council Fact Sheet "Accomplishing More Together").* These councils bring members of the monitoring community together to share their expertise and knowledge and to promote strategic monitoring efforts at an appropriate scale.
- Sponsoring development and adoption of the **National Environmental Methods Index (NEMI)** that provides assistance in choosing appropriate field and laboratory methods to meet specified monitoring objectives. See www.nemi.gov for additional information.
- Sponsoring development and adoption of the **Water Quality Data Elements** — metadata that should be included with water quality results so that data comparability can be assessed.
- Publishing position papers on **Laboratory Accreditation** that describe a process that will give regulators and others in the monitoring community confidence that water quality data have been produced by qualified personnel using appropriate quality control and quality assurance procedures.

Member organizations of the Council

Federal:

U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Tennessee Valley Authority
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Park Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Tribal:

Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.

States representing Federal regions:

New Hampshire Department Environmental Services
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Alabama Department of Environmental Management
Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
California State Water Resources Control Board
Washington Department of Ecology
South Florida Water Management District
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Other:

Water Environment Federation
North American Lake Management Society
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Association of Conservation Districts
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
Association of American State Geologists
Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission
American Society of Limnology and Oceanography
American Chemistry Council
University of Rhode Island, Watershed Watch
Colorado State University, Water Resources Research Institute
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Institutes of Water Resources

Additional information can be obtained through the
National Water Quality Monitoring Council's Web site at:

http://acwi.gov/monitoring/

Charles Spooner
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
(202) 566-1174
spooner.charles@epa.gov

Gail Mallard
U.S. Geological Survey
(401) 322-0902
gmallard@usgs.gov