Applying knowledge to improve water quality
Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring
National Facilitation Project
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Volunteer Management and Support

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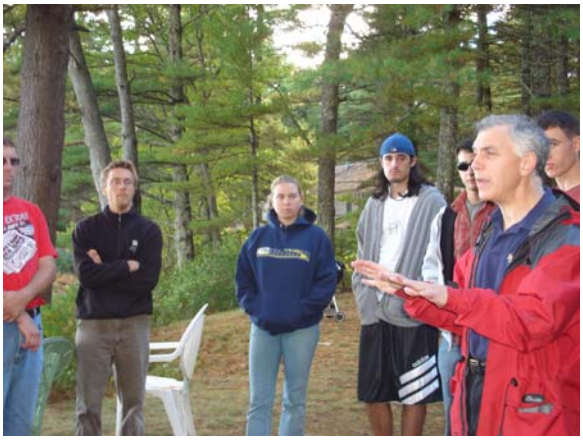

Active and committed volunteers are the heart of any volunteer water quality monitoring program. Successful volunteer management takes a good deal of effort, time and skill, and may be the most satisfying part of running a volunteer monitoring program. It is, however, much more than simply "training a few folks to collect water samples." It is crucial for program success. This factsheet builds on decades of experiences by program managers in the volunteer monitoring community. It highlights volunteer management and support tools and provides suggestions to help keep your volunteer monitors inspired, motivated and involved. ***This module will focus on the five R's of volunteer monitoring: rights, responsibilities, recruitment, recognition and retention.*** *The Volunteer Monitor*, the national newsletter of volunteer water quality monitoring, was a significant reference for this module, and in particular, The "Managing a Volunteer Monitoring Program" issue http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer/newsletter/volmon08no1.pdf.

Volunteering – A Great National Habit

The Independent Sector's biennial national survey assesses trends in giving and charitable behavior such as volunteerism (http://www.independentsector.org/GandV/default.htm). The findings can help program managers to better understand what motivates volunteers.

Some key findings from recent surveys:

- 44% of adults (21 and older) volunteer for a formal organization.
- 63% of those volunteer on a regular basis (monthly or more often).
- 39% of volunteers preferred to volunteer at a regularly scheduled time, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, whereas for 41% of volunteers, serving is a sporadic, one-time activity.
- Women are slightly more likely to volunteer than men.
- 42% of the volunteers found out about activities through personal contact while 35% found out through participation in an organization.
- 89% of adults volunteered when directly asked to by another individual.
- While 60% of survey respondents had internet access, only 10% of them used the internet to search for volunteer activities.
- Each volunteer contributes an average of 3.6 hours weekly.
- 83.9 million American adults volunteer, representing the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of $239 billion (2000 dollar value).

This is the eighth in a series of factsheet modules which comprise the **Guide for Growing CSREES Volunteer Monitoring Programs,** part of the *National Facilitation of Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service (CSREES) Volunteer Monitoring Efforts* project. Funded through the USDA CSREES, the purpose of this project is to build a comprehensive support system for Extension volunteer water quality monitoring efforts nationally. The goal is to expand and strengthen the capacity of existing Extension volunteer monitoring programs and support development of new groups. Please see http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/ for more information.

Know Your Volunteers

Effective volunteer management starts with understanding what motivates volunteers to monitor. Some volunteers are interested in learning new skills, perhaps to help them with school or for professional development. Others have a deep commitment to a specific resource and may only wish to participate if they can monitor a particular site. And some may be interested in meeting others with similar interests in outdoor or conservation activities. Volunteers also have varying amount of time available and differing interests in the kinds of monitoring they want to participate in.

A 2006 assessment of trained volunteers with the Water Action Volunteers program in Wisconsin (http://clean-water.uwex.edu/wav/) found that altruistic reasons such as *helping to provide information on water resources, general support of conservation* and *learning about water environs* or *concern for a specific water body* were among the most common given for participating in a monitoring program. But other reasons included *integrating monitoring into classrooms* or simply *enjoyment* (http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/pdf/level1/news/2006WAVSurveyResults.pdf). Knowing your volunteers and their needs, and providing opportunities that accommodate them, such as including social or advanced training activities, or not scheduling training sessions during school vacations, can help keep volunteers interested and engaged. Conversely, understanding the requirements of your monitoring efforts allows you to better target potential volunteers. Documenting the roles and responsibilities of both the volunteers and program staff is an essential first step for more effective volunteer recruitment and management.

Rights and Responsibilities

Ensuring that the volunteers have a good experience is an essential element of successful volunteer monitoring programs. Helping the volunteers to recognize exactly what is expected of them and what they can expect from your program reduces misunderstandings and improves overall satisfaction for both the volunteers and program staff. While there will be rights and responsibilities specific to your program and your volunteers, some issues are inherent to all our programs. Recognizing and incorporating these into your program development and management can help reduce potential disappointment on the part of your volunteers, who may have had other expectations and also for program staff who may have trained volunteers unable or unwilling to participate as expected.

Typical Volunteer Rights

To be provided appropriate orientation and training – Providing a good sense of how the volunteers fit into the overall goals and focus of your program, describing exactly what it is that they are being asked to do, and that they either already have, or will be provided, the necessary resources to accomplish the defined tasks, in addition to showing them how to monitor helps potential volunteers to better understand if your program is the right fit for them. Effective orientation and training programs also reduce your overall effort by allowing volunteers who are not likely to fulfill your needs opt out earlier in the process (please see *Factsheet V - Training Volunteer Water Quality Monitors Effectively* at http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/Outreach/EffectiveTrainingV.pdf).

To have clear, appropriate assignments – Providing understandable, written instructions and using methods appropriate to the tasks as well as the skills of your volunteers is essential. Other modules in this guide provide information on designing your program, selecting methods, as well as quality control and quality assurance. Please see http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer/GuideForGrowing/index.html for the full list of modules.

To have fulfilling work – Don't create "busy work" just to keep your volunteers occupied. Be sure to monitor parameters that provide data and information relevant to your program's goals and data needs – and help your volunteers understand what the results mean.

To have informed involvement with agency supervision and support – Helping the volunteers to understand what the results mean, how their efforts fit into the big picture and answering questions as they come up is critical. Better understanding helps the volunteers to feel more invested in the process and more confident in their results.

To be recognized for their contribution – Your volunteers provide a great service. They deserve recognition of the time, energy and resources they commit (more on this later).

To be respected as a volunteer – Remembering that your volunteers are just that, individuals volunteering their valuable time, will help you set realistic expectations as you make changes or additions to your monitoring program.

To have time put to best use – Ensuring that you are well prepared for training and monitoring activities, that sites are a reasonable distance from volunteers' homes or workplaces (i.e. they are not driving one hour for ten minutes worth of monitoring), that methods are as efficient as possible, etc. will help your volunteers feel that their time has not been wasted.

To be provided safe, healthy and appropriate working conditions – For liability reasons and continued volunteer satisfaction, site and monitoring procedure selection needs to take into account safety and overall comfort of the volunteers. Also ensuring that site selection respects private property rights will reduce the potential for unpleasant confrontations between your volunteers and property owners.

Typical Program Rights

To expect support for the program and its personnel – A monitoring program needs to be collaborative, with staff providing volunteers with support, but also receiving support from its volunteers.

To screen volunteers – Ensuring that you have appropriate volunteers to meet your program's needs is essential, and that requires some form of screening. That can be done in a formal way with an interview or certification process, or more informally.

To request references – In some cases getting references may be important, especially if volunteers will be on private property or involved in sensitive issues.

To require volunteers to attend trainings – Effective training is a centerpiece of volunteer monitoring efforts, and typically provides not only information on how to monitor, but why monitoring is important. Also, if volunteers are not able to make time to attend a training session, they are not likely to be able to fit monitoring into their schedule.

To expect volunteers to be responsible – Programs make a significant investment in terms of time, equipment and analyses, and need to be able to trust that their volunteers will recognize that and be conscientious about their monitoring.

To reassign volunteers if needed – While program staff need to recognize that volunteers usually have an interest in a particular monitoring site, sometimes the needs of the program may require additional volunteers elsewhere. Knowing that you have the flexibility to reassign volunteers to new locations or duties strengthens your ability to respond to changes within the program or the environment.

To receive notice of leaving – Again, integrity of the monitoring data requires that programs be notified in advance if possible when volunteers will be leaving the program, or going on extended trips if it will affect their monitoring schedule.

Clearly describing your expectations of the volunteers, or their responsibilities, allows potential recruits to better understand what they are committing to – and whether their time, interest, resources or schedule are actually compatible with your program. Since it's very uncomfortable to "fire" a volunteer, having a list of clearly defined volunteer responsibilities makes it easier to explain to new recruits or even current volunteers why it might be better if they participated in a different capacity or even with a different program. In turn, your volunteers should understand exactly what your program's responsibilities are to them, as well as what they are not. Documenting your responsibilities can reduce unfounded expectations that can result in frustration on the part of volunteers.

Volunteer Management and Support

Typical Volunteer Responsibilities

To understand their role as a volunteer – Your volunteers provide a great service, and can expect a certain amount of flexibility on your part, but they must also understand that monitoring programs have specific requirements, especially if you have time sensitive analyses or specific data quality objectives to meet your data quality objectives.

To be honest about their goals, skills, limitations and motivations – Often truly well intentioned individuals think they will be able to do more than they really have the time for. Being realistic benefits both the volunteer who may feel guilty if they can't monitor as often as they ought to, and the program which can better focus its resources.

To fulfill their commitment – Volunteers must agree to be responsible to do what they say they will do. Ensuring that the volunteers understand the importance of their efforts can help them realistically assess their ability to fulfill them.

To cooperate with staff – For both the safety of participants and the integrity of the program, it is critical that volunteers listen to, and cooperate with program staff.

To be flexible and open-minded – Sometimes volunteers wish to monitor because they believe that there is a particular problem or they are interested in only a specific site. Being flexible and recognizing the needs of the monitoring program can produce more useful information than may be possible if each individual was to focus on their own issue. In addition, if the data don't support the preconceived notion, it is important that the volunteers be able to accept that and try to understand what may be causing the results.

To stay informed – Changes in the monitoring site or other local conditions can have significant influence on water quality and how monitoring data are interpreted. Therefore it is important that volunteers are aware of what is happening locally, and to inform their coordinator if site or other conditions change.

To ask for help – Since childhood we've heard that "There are no stupid questions." That is particularly true with volunteer programs. No one wants to waste time – and if monitoring is not conducted according to program protocols, that can happen. And sometimes simple questions can lead to intriguing discoveries, allowing for a better understanding of local resources or improved explanations in written manuals or training sessions.

Volunteer Management and Support

Typical Program Responsibilities

To provide a written job description – A written description reduces confusion and can be an effective tool in recruiting new volunteers.

To interview volunteers for the best placement – Learning about your volunteers is critical for making monitoring assignments that fit both the program's and the volunteer's goals and resources.

To provide appropriate training - Effective training of volunteer water quality monitors is critical for volunteer competency and satisfaction (again see *Factsheet V* for more information).

To provide supervision – Making sure that your volunteers are conducting their monitoring according to protocols is one of the most valuable things you can do to ensure that they are not wasting their time and are producing data of sufficient quality. Effective supervision can improve the overall experience of the volunteers and program success.

To communicate, communicate, communicate – This can not be repeated enough. Volunteers need to know that what they are doing is important, that they are doing it correctly, and that "someone" is using the information. Feedback in the form of letters, newsletters, monitoring reports, presentations at association meetings, as well as regularly updated websites are critical for letting your volunteers that the program is active and that their hard work is not being wasted.

To consider your volunteers as teammates – Seek and respect volunteer contributions. This helps build a stronger program and can result in surprising benefits. Volunteers in a number of programs have created new monitoring equipment or procedures, and brought creative funding options and other innovations that might not have been possible without them. They can also be a great recruiting tool!

To inform them of special benefits – If your program can provide volunteers with special benefits such as continuing education or community service hours, reduced cost admission to conferences, or low cost analysis of well water, it behooves you to make that information available to all *active* volunteers.

To consider experienced volunteers for leadership – Long term volunteers make very effective local coordinators, providing a perspective that staff may not have. Offering leadership opportunities to experienced volunteers can keep individuals who might be becoming bored with monitoring engaged with the program.

To conduct an exit interview – Evaluating how your program operates is an ongoing task, and exit interviews can be an extremely useful tool for determining what things are working well, and where improvements might be needed. Exit interviews can be particularly helpful in helping you to understand why volunteers leave your program, which allows you make changes that might enhance retention.

Volunteer Job Descriptions

Written volunteer job descriptions can be simple for basic monitoring efforts (see next page), or more detailed, incorporating some of the issues above if long term volunteers are sought or the monitoring is expected to be more complex. Regardless, besides volunteer duties, the job description should include a brief account of what the volunteers can expect from the program, and what your expectations as a program are. An effectively written volunteer "job description" can also help a new recruit realize that in fact they can handle this – it's not as hard as they had envisioned.

Volunteer Job Description

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Volunteer Program

Job Title: Fauna Assessment and Monitoring Assistant

Supervisor(s): Bioassessment and Monitoring Program Coordinator

Location: Reserve

Project Duration: Ongoing **Hours Per Week:** 4 to 6 **Hours Per Month:** 8 to 12

Description of duties:

Assist Reserve staff in establishing new fauna monitoring sites and ongoing monitoring of established monitoring sites. This position allows a volunteer to learn about fauna and the effects of land management practices on animal communities at the Reserve. **Specific duties include:**

- Assist marking fauna monitoring site locations.
- Assist setting up animal traps within fauna monitoring sites.
- Assist capturing, measuring, marking, and recording type and numbers of animal species located within vegetation communities.
- Maintain field and laboratory equipment in a tidy, operational manner including some cleaning and maintenance.
- Use knowledge obtained to lead discussions and tours of the Reserve and Environmental Learning Center facility giving an overview of the animal communities of the Reserve, the bioassessment and monitoring program and its objectives.

Benefits to volunteer:

- Increased knowledge about the natural resources within the Reserve.
- Satisfaction of educating the public about the importance of the Reserve and the resources it protects.
- Interaction with Reserve staff.

Goal/Outcome of Job:

Provide accurate data for Reserve bioassessment and monitoring program

Knowledge/Skills/Experience Desired:

- Although training is provided, some understanding of animals is helpful.
- Willingness to engage visitors in conversation, answer questions and offer information.
- General speaking skills that include clarity, enunciation, and sufficient volume to speak to a group.

Special Requirements:

Volunteers need to be self-motivated, able to work in sometimes hot and rugged conditions. A friendly, easygoing attitude and a desire to learn and share with others. This position will require some thoughtful study to become as knowledgeable as possible about Rookery Bay. This position will also require the volunteer to spend extended periods of time standing.

"Well-run volunteer programs recruit automatically. Build a better program and the volunteers will beat a path to your door." McCurley, S. and S. Vineyard, 101 Ways to Recruit Volunteers, Heritage Arts Publishing Co., 1986

Volunteer Recruitment

Regardless of whether you are just getting started, expanding your program, or simply trying to maintain your existing coverage, it is quite likely that each monitoring season you will need new volunteers. *Recruitment is defined as the act of identifying groups and individuals for service, and then actually asking them to volunteer* (Rehnborg and Clubine 2004 http://www.serviceleader.org/new/managers/2004/03/000213.php). New volunteer recruitment should be considered an ongoing activity even if you only train new volunteers at specific times of the year. By developing a strong program and getting the word out regularly, people will be more aware of your efforts and more likely to respond when you invite them to participate.

Volunteer recruitment can be done informally – spreading the word about your program and accepting volunteers as they come, or formally – marketing your program and screening volunteers as they "apply", depending on your needs. Whichever structure you choose, your existing volunteers should be considered your most valuable recruitment tool. They know others in the community with similar interests and experience, have access to local meetings, newsletters and other outlets, and should be viewed as ambassadors for your program. Having volunteers describe their experiences can be a tremendous boost for your recruitment efforts – lending both credibility to your efforts and providing a unique perspective.

Tips for Recruitment

Work with established groups with compatible interests (such as Sierra Club, Audubon, Trout Unlimited, Scouts, local land trusts, environmental action groups, or other community groups) near your proposed monitoring site to target their membership.

Do not start recruiting until you are ready to deliver. Nothing turns off volunteers more than being told "we'll get back to you when we are ready to start."

Provide plenty of support in the form of training, manuals, etc.

Provide feedback. Updates about results and other activities are essential. Offer refresher trainings regularly.

Contributed by Nancy Hadley, South Carolina Oyster Restoration and Enhancement (SCORE) Project Manager

Finding Volunteers

Newspapers or newsletters – Concise well written press releases (who, what, when, where, why, how) should be sent with a preferred date of publication, and whenever possible should include a locally relevant "hook". For example, in an area recovering from recent flooding, the title and focus of the article might be water quality impacts from flooding. There are many websites that will help you write an effective press release. Two to check out are Dr. Randall Hansen's Guide to Writing Successful Press Releases http://www.randallshansen.com/prguide.html and http://www.easymedialist.com/ideas/pressreleases.html which also allows you the opportunity to purchase customized media contact lists for less than $10.

Community organizations – Attending meetings and direct solicitations to community groups in watersheds you intend to monitor not only builds your volunteer base, but can also provide partners for improved stewardship and advocacy. Involvement with monitoring programs can also help local groups build their own memberships, as volunteer monitors often learn about those community groups through their monitoring efforts.

Shoreline residents – Not only do shoreline residents typically have the easiest access to a waterbody, but they have a more direct interest in the resource. Working from address-matching software to contact these residents as well as through lake, river, neighborhood or watershed association mailings and meetings can be a particularly effective means of reaching potential volunteers. (See http://www.uiowa.edu/~geog/health/address/address.html or http://www.esri.com/library/whitepapers/pdfs/streetmap.pdf for more information on address matching software.)

Sporting organizations – Local fishing, boating, birding and Scouting groups all have an interest in local water resources and often provide community service. These groups frequently have newsletters for their members as well as regular meetings.

Fairs, festivals and other community events – Staffing booths which present relevant monitoring data in an attractive and interesting way as well as offering interactive activities, such as allowing visitors to try their hand at Secchi depth readings in tanks of turbid waters, looking at macroinvertebrates under microscopes, identifying aquatic plants, etc. can be both effective and fun ways to get your message to a diverse audience.

Brochures – Having well written, attractive brochures available for distribution at various venues will ensure that your message, and more importantly, your contact information are easily available to potential volunteers. See *Visual Design Basics: Creating Effective Handouts, Flyers and Brochures* (10 pp. http://www.mscare.org/cmsc/images/pdf/document_design_brown.pdf) and http://www.allgraphicdesign.com/ for guidance in producing more effective brochures.

Word of mouth – As stated earlier, having your volunteers telling their friends and neighbors about your program, and asking them to get involved is often your most effective recruitment tool.

Television and radio – Local stations can be great outlets for getting the word out about your program, often generating a good deal of initial interest. However, follow through by potential volunteers, is typically low. Send press releases to news directors or community calendars to get your efforts listed.

Internet – Having a useful program website not only serves as a point of contact for current volunteers, but can be a great way for potential volunteers to learn more about your program. If your website is regularly updated, including its URL in all of your recruitment materials can be very valuable. However, an out of date website can harm recruitment since it may shake the viewer's confidence in the relevance of your program. If you have a website – make sure it's up to date. If keeping on top of it is simply too much for your program, reconsider the value of having a website. (A wealth of information exists on the web on designing effective websites. Here are two that cover the basics and are a good place to start: http://www.nonprofittips.com/is-my-web-site-ineffective-an-introduction/ .

Volunteer Retention

Once you've successfully recruited your volunteers, how do you keep them? Just as volunteer recruitment needs to be an integral on-going part of your monitoring program, volunteer retention efforts should be incorporated throughout. The better targeted your recruitment efforts are, the more likely you will find volunteers who understand and support your program's goals, and the more likely they will stay with your program. Providing effective training, good communication and regular feedback all enhance volunteer retention, as well as the overall quality of your program.

Several astute volunteer monitoring program coordinators have identified specific reasons why volunteers leave a program, as well as action items to address those. This section is based on the experiences of long time former Florida LAKEWATCH (http://lakewatch.ifas.ufl.edu/) program director Sandy Fisher as reported in *The Volunteer Monitor (*http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer/newsletter/volmon08no1.pdf*)*. Notes kept from phone conversations with volunteers who had resigned (essentially "exit interviews") documented some common themes, and allowed Fisher to create an action plan to improve volunteer retention.

Some reasons volunteers leave are beyond the control of the program. These include moving away from the water or the area, health problems, and major life changes such as new jobs, new spouses, babies, or other things that change the amount of time people had to devote to monitoring. While you certainly can't makes changes to address these, you can ask the departing volunteers for contact information of neighbors, friends or family that might be interested in replacing them.

Common causes of attrition within your program's control include loss of volunteer interest, frustration due to no changes in water quality conditions, and lack of effective feedback from the program. A number of techniques can be used to alleviate these problems, while strengthening your overall program.

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Lisa DeProspo Philo, URI - Page 8
St Louis River Watch Program - Pages 13 & 16
Denise Poyer, Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Assn - Page 15

Techniques for Retaining Volunteers

- Some volunteers lose interest in monitoring because there are no more challenges (it's gotten easy, and then repetitious) or it seems there is nothing left to learn. By its very nature, ecological monitoring must be repetitious in order for conditions or trends to become discernable, and that should be made very clear during the recruitment and training phase. By enrolling new volunteers selectively, with long-term commitment as a primary criterion, you can reduce the number of volunteers that drop-out within the first season or two. In addition, there are ways you can keep experienced volunteers energized.

- Offering veteran volunteers training in additional or advanced monitoring parameters not only rewards them, but creates a new component of water quality to study, which can be especially interesting for those monitoring stable waterbodies. Asking experienced volunteers to become new volunteer trainers can help motivate the veterans, while building confidence in the new volunteers who might think that ordinary people can't monitor water quality. Enlisting experienced volunteers in other aspects of your program, including data presentation, program evaluation, fundraising or recruiting will help keep volunteer interest, and improve all aspects of your program. Also, individuals considering leaving the program may be interested in staying on as substitute monitors covering sites for others when they are away on vacation, or as alternates, monitoring on a less frequent basis.

- Effective feedback is crucial for maintaining volunteer interest and participation. This includes providing volunteers with timely data reports in a useful format – something that can be challenging for many of our typically understaffed volunteer programs. However with some creativity and feedback from your volunteers, this can be accomplished. Newsletters are another frequently used tool for ensuring that your volunteers hear from you regularly. By soliciting articles, photos and other materials for inclusion, newsletters can also be excellent way to involve experienced volunteers.

- Some programs have created basic reporting templates that include generic information about various parameters (i.e. water clarity) as well as site specific information (i.e. charts of a particular lake's water clarity) to facilitate data reporting. These templates can include spaces for photos, maps and other site specific text. The templates can be automated with data and other objects placed in files that can be merged by computer software, or manually updated by program staff. The use of report templates allows staff to relatively quickly update reports and get information to the volunteers in a more timely fashion. One example of the use of basic templates includes the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's lake profiles (http://www.watershedcouncil.org/protect/water%20quality%20monitoring/current%20lake%20profiles/).

Volunteer Management and Support

Websites have been embraced by the volunteer monitoring community as another great way to report monitoring data. There are a variety of formats to deliver the data including static reports, tables and charts or dynamic, interactive systems. (Please see *Factsheet IX - Considerations for Planning Your Program's Data Management System* http://www.usawaterquality.org/Volunteer/Outreach/Databases.pdf.) Some examples:

- Westchester County Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Program which posts its published reports online (http://cvmp.westchestergov.com/cvmp/).
- URI Watershed Watch which includes static tables, charts with descriptions of the monitoring parameter, and links to relevant factsheets (http://www.uri.edu/ce/wq/ww/Data.htm).
- Wisconsin's Citizen Lake Monitoring Network which includes static data charts, reports and limited ability to customize data summary reports (http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/CLMN/).
- Alabama Water Watch uses a secure website that allows its volunteers and other authorized users to identify sites and then select from a drop down menu charts and graphs for specific parameters. Those are created from the program online database, which ensures that they are as up to date as data review protocols allow (https://fp.auburn.edu/icaae/index.aspx).

However, even timely data summary reports will not satisfy all volunteers. Employing a variety of feedback types will ensure that nearly all of your volunteers find something that works for them. This can include videos, brochures, in-person presentations, regular newsletters or updates, and workshops. Meetings or workshops are particularly useful because they create an opportunity for program staff to answer volunteers' questions or concerns in person.

Finally, effective screening of potential volunteers can't be over emphasized. Selective enrollment (not taking every warm body that walks through the door) will ensure that your volunteers are assigned roles that meet their goals, which is essential to their overall satisfaction. Develop an initial interview that:

- ✓ Emphasizes the benefits of long-term data,
- ✓ Reminds volunteers to not expect data alone to solve any particular problem,
- ✓ Advises volunteers about the process of data analysis that may result in feedback taking longer than anticipated, and
- ✓ Identifies and "weeds out" potential volunteers with goals significantly different from the program (for example, expecting to test for pesticides when your program monitors water clarity and chlorophyll.)

For other ideas on retaining your volunteers, please see: **The Volunteer Center Retention Tip Sheet** - http://www.serve.nebraska.gov/pdf/resources/Volunteer%20Retention%20Tip%20Sheet%20The%20Volunteer%20Center.pdf

Resources for Managing Volunteers

Many organizations rely upon volunteers to help accomplish their goals, so a wealth of information is available on volunteer management. Below are some excellent resources from a variety of sources :

How to Motivate Volunteers - The Top Motivation and Retention Winners (by Thomas McKee on Volunteer Power website) http://www.volunteerpower.com/articles/motivate.asp.

Southern Maine Beach Profile Monitoring Volunteer Manual (24 pp.) - http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/files/pdf-global/06volman.pdf University of Maine Cooperative Extension/Sea Grant. While this manual is specific to beach profile monitoring, it includes good examples of volunteer job descriptions, volunteer waiver forms and similar resources.

Volunteer Management Practices and Retention of Volunteers (16 pp.) - http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411005_VolunteerManagement.pdf Urban Institute.

Volunteer Program Resources - http://www.thevolunteercenter.net/?NVLC_ResourceLibrary The Volunteer Center has developed several resources that you can download to help with planning and implementing a successful volunteer program.

Volunteering Qld (Queensland, Australia) **Volunteer Management Resources** - http://www.volunteeringqld.org.au/home/index.php/nonprofits/resource-central/volunteer-management.

Developing and Managing Volunteer Programs - http://www.managementhelp.org/staffing/outsrcng/volnteer/volnteer.htm provides links (some broken) to a wealth of information

Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet (204 pp.) - http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/documents/VolunteerMagnet2nded_000.pdf A knowledge-sharing initiative within the international community of volunteer program managers for peer-to-peer professional development.

***No Surprises* Volunteer Risk Management Online Tutorial** http://nonprofitrisk.org/tools/volunteer/no-surprises.shtml Nonprofit Risk Management Center.

Volunteer Recruitment, Relations and Management online articles http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rvol.html Charity Village.com.

Volunteer Management Review™ http://charitychannel.com/Articles/VolunteerManagementReview/tabid/1697/Default.aspx CharityChannel is a resource that connects nonprofit colleagues across town, across the country, and around the world.

Developing and Managing Volunteer Programs (Online Library) - http://managementhelp.org/staffing/outsrcng/volnteer/volnteer.htm

Points of Light Foundation - http://www.pointsoflight.org/ The Foundation advocates community service through a partnership with the Volunteer Center National Network. This website provides access to information on a wide range of volunteer management topics.

Making Episodic and Key Volunteers Work for You - http://www.solv.org/volunteers/key_vs_episodic.asp Housed within the SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) website.

VolunteerToday.com ~ The Electronic Gazette for Volunteerism - http://www.volunteertoday.com/default.htm Volunteer Today is an e-newsletter for those who manage the work of volunteers in nonprofit, government or corporate programs.

Serviceleader.org - http://www.serviceleader.org/new/managers/index.php This comprehensive website provides information on all aspects of volunteer management. ServiceLeader.org is a project of the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Motivating Volunteers - http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cd/2000/fs0030.pdf University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Factsheet

Volunteer Recognition
(adapted from *The Volunteer Monitor,* Vol. 8, No.1 (http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer/newsletter/volmon08no1.pdf).

Showing your volunteers that you appreciate their work improves volunteer retention and satisfaction. The best rewards are those that match the volunteers' reasons for participating in your program.

Finding a novel way to say thank-you can remind your volunteers how important and special they are. Here are some suggestions:

- Provide enticing refreshments as an on-the-spot thank-you. Visit your local farmer's market for fresh, locally grown fruits and baked goods. Brew aromatic coffee!
- Offer handouts and informational brochures from relevant programs and organizations. The organizations will appreciate the opportunity to spread the word about what they do and broadcast upcoming events, and the volunteers will appreciate that you consider them "part of the team."
- Picnics, BBQ's, and parties celebrating monitoring season starts/ends or program anniversaries,
- Certificates recognizing the completion of various monitoring mileposts,
- Hats, t-shirts or buttons emblazoned with program logos,
- Handmade gifts such as Secchi Disk holiday ornaments,
- Enrichment classes providing information in addition to the training provided to "new" volunteers,
- Leadership lunches or dinners for local coordinators or others participating at an advanced level,
- Thank-you letters, both those sent to individual volunteers or included in local newspapers or program newsletters,
- Volunteer profiles in newsletters highlighting specific individuals or groups of volunteers,
- Annual conferences that provide additional watershed stewardship information as well as report on monitoring results,
- Rafting or boating trips, or other outdoor recreational activities,
- One-on-one support to address specific issues of local concern,
- Conference scholarship funds to facilitate participation in regional or national events.

For more ideas, see Ohio State Extension Service's website http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/downloads/ext_ed/pdf/131and139.pdf for 139 Ways to Say "Thank-You" and Recognize Volunteers.

The experience itself is an important reward – but seeing that the data are actually put to good use is typically the greatest motivator of all. That means that creating a strong program that produces quality data appropriate to their intended use, and then are distributed in an useful format is the perhaps most important thing you can do to recognize your volunteers' efforts.

"The most effective recognition is to make volunteers feel they're a necessary part of the organization. Ask them for input in planning and for feedback on the program"
Susan Handley, Public Involvement and Education Coordinator, USEPA Region 10

Three Steps to Effective Volunteer Management

In response to a VolMon listserve inquiry regarding working with volunteers, Steve Cochrane prepared a succinct summary of effective steps for volunteer management based on his experiences with the Friends of the San Francisco Estuary (http://sfep.abag.ca.gov/about/friends.html).

"Volunteers can be ambassadors helping grants and goodwill to flow into your program. Volunteers are worth your efforts, but be sure to include volunteer management in your program design.

You will need:

1. Written job descriptions for the various volunteer aspects of your program. For example some folks will be interested in computer support but not field work. Other volunteers may want to help with public relations, or field volunteers may be interested in water quality but not vegetation. When you find volunteers, send them a packet with your program description and position descriptions. Set up and interview volunteers to determine where they fit into your program. Since monetary compensation is not drawing them, be sure to find out what attracts them to your program. Listen carefully to what they say, be sure you have a compatible match between the volunteer and job.
2. To designate a point person as the volunteer coordinator. It is important to have one person for volunteers to report to in order to keep chaos from overtaking your program. The coordinator should know how to contact all involved in the project, recruit volunteers (expect lots of turnover), arrange training, be involved in QAQC, be able to get answers to volunteers' questions, and serve as the main communication hub for volunteers (e.g. explain where the data go and why, what do the data show, equipment repair/replacement, social events, newsletter, phone list, additional training, trouble shooting, etc).
3. To write up all of your volunteer management procedures in addition to your monitoring protocols. Read up on how to manage a volunteer program at your local volunteer center, especially in regards to recruitment, training, recognition and retention. Without the proper care and feeding of your volunteers your program will not survive.

Remember, volunteers are not free! It takes time, energy and planning to support them. Being a coordinator can be a full time people management position, so budget staff or other volunteers accordingly."

Summary

Effective volunteer management is the foundation on which volunteer water quality monitoring programs are based. Good "people management" requires commitment on the part of the program leadership, and extends far beyond volunteer training. Recognizing the unique needs and goals of your volunteers, and addressing them throughout your program is essential. Documenting the rights and responsibilities you have to volunteers and they to you will help focus your recruitment efforts. Developing good screening tools that permit you to enroll those individuals whose goals and expectations match your program's will result in more targeted recruitment and training, and increased retention of volunteers. Retaining trained volunteers not only reduces the impact on program resources, but enhances the value and use of long-term data. Appropriate recognition of volunteer efforts includes seeing that the data are put to good use, as well as regularly, and often creatively, saying thank-you. By weaving good volunteer management practices throughout your program you will not only increase volunteer satisfaction, but program viability and sustainability.

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