

Incorporating Citizen Volunteer Monitoring into Regional Water Quality Management

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With the increased importance of Quality Assurance Program Planning, what are the challenges of continued use of volunteer monitoring, and how can this monitoring be facilitated to provide relevant data while continuing to meet quality assurance needs, and support interstate legal and environmental needs. An important aspect of Citizen's Voluntary Monitoring is to gain public awareness and involvement to preserve water quality and to guide water quality decisions involving implementation, restoration, effectiveness monitoring, and long term trend detection. In the face of declining budgets for monitoring and project implementation, how does the Department of Environmental Quality maintain the basic flow of data to characterize rivers, streams, and lakes and identify needed investigations to protect and assess water quality? Partnerships with citizen's groups including Lake Associations, Conservation Groups, Land Management Agencies, Soil Conservation Commissions, Idaho Farm Bureau, Municipal Dischargers, University of Idaho, Watershed Advisory Groups, and local government provide critical monitoring and communication pathways to stimulate awareness of water quality conditions and innovative solutions to water quality challenges. In managing Idaho's highest density and volume of high quality waters, the waters of Northern Idaho, it has become essential to prioritize monitoring resources to meet the need for basic trend identification to augment TMDL development and watershed characterization as well as water body assessments. Data is used to characterize directed monitoring needed to develop load allocations, provide water quality certification parameters and NPDES permit conditions. Also to assess effectiveness of implementation efforts on waters that were not previously supporting beneficial uses.