

New England Association of Environmental Biologists 2007 Annual Conference  
West Dover, Vermont  
Nexus Café, 3/15/07

**Moving from Data to Action: Enhancing community based volunteer monitoring.** What steps can we take to encourage and support community groups in their effort to monitor, protect and restore our waters? How can we make scientific and environmental indicators more public friendly? How do we educate and engage the public without causing alarm or complacency? (Table 7)

### Discussion Summary

**Moderator: Linda Green**

**What steps can we take to encourage and support community groups in their effort to monitor, protect and restore our waters?**

- Provide feedback that you will act on findings
- Issue environmental report card (red/yellow/green icons), not data
  - 1 pagers
  - Divorce science from results
  - Appealing to public and youth
  - Problem that state may disregard results
- Professional sounding board for ideas and results
- Sampling smaller streams
  - Ability to cover areas that professionals cannot
  - Broad approach
  - First alert
- Attract interest by monitoring bugs
- Set up templates for presentations
- Define use of data ahead of time
- Provide help with analyses (state universities)
- Funding
  - Particularly for continuation of projects/programs
- QAPP assistance
- Video of volunteer monitoring techniques
- Videos of lake management strategies
- Food!

**How can we make scientific and environmental indicators more public friendly?**

- Stoplight style report card (especially popular)
- Visual inspections
  - Widening erosion
  - Pipes/culverts
- Use more easily understood terminology
  - Trout friendly
  - Weeds vs aquatic invasive
  - Pea soup
  - Dead
  - Learn about plants in your lake vs aquatic plant monitoring
  - Endangering your fish
  - Dying, suffocating, stinky, slimy, scummy

- Use icons
  - Jumping fish
  - Test tubes for DO (or other chemistry)
  - Swimmer for bacteria (crossed out for above limit)
  - River bend for habitat & deep enough to float on
- Bug-o-meter
- Signage such as Org for Assabet's water quality meter
- New articles
- Swimable-canoeable-wadable
- Involve local weather forecasters

**How do we educate and engage the public without causing alarm or complacency (AKA best education practices)?**

- Give talks – to public, conservation commissions
- Newspaper column, periodic
- Streamside – show 'em the bugs
- Interactive presentations with youth
- Annual updates
- Partner with the media
- Provide education on resources available for next steps
- Cultivate leadership
- Provide “to learn more about it...” Info

Relevant websites on this topic

[www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer](http://www.usawaterquality.org/volunteer)

[http://www.usawaterquality.org/newengland/Focus\\_Areas/volunteer/](http://www.usawaterquality.org/newengland/Focus_Areas/volunteer/)

<http://www.assabriver.org/>

**Moderator: Linda Green\***

**Attendees:** (\*>= 15 years in the field, aka the veterans)

**Round 1**

Kelly Nolan  
 Adrienne Pappal  
 Bill Hoadley\*  
 Warren Kimball\*  
 Matthew Lajoie  
 Dawn Keppler

**Round 2:**

Jeffrey V. Ojada  
 Tom Danielson  
 Leslie Matthews  
 Sarah Wheeler  
 Miranda Lascaze  
 Sue Kiernan\*  
 Maria Aliberti  
 Neil Kamman

**Round 3:**

Ginny Garrison\*

Peter Mitchell

Beth Connors

Jeff Barrett

Tom Torchet

Ashley Wright

Christine Manuck

John Littel\*