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Voluntary Estuary Monitoring Manual

Chapter 4: Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Volunteers

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Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Volunteers



Volunteers are the basic ingredient of a successful volunteer monitoring program.

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Overview

Not surprisingly, volunteers are the basic ingredient of a successful volunteer monitoring program. These citizens bring more than just manpower to the monitoring program—they also bring a passion to understand, protect, and/or restore the estuary. Trained volunteers can serve an irreplaceable role as community educators as they conduct their monitoring duties and share their knowledge with others.

Although states monitor water quality and other environmental parameters of estuaries, there are limits to the coverage they can provide. Volunteers can supplement this work by monitoring in areas where officials are not sampling. State officials can then use this information to screen for areas of possible contamination, habitat loss, or other conditions that impact the health of the estuary.

This chapter discusses how to recruit, train, and retain top-notch volunteers.

Recruiting Volunteers

As you recruit volunteers, it is helpful to understand what motivates people to donate their time and energy to a volunteer effort. Citizens may commit not only because of their conviction in the merits of the cause, but also because they will personally benefit from the experience. Many people volunteer for service reasons; they believe in the cause and want to help. Others hope for new friendships and enjoy the social interaction with like-minded individuals. People are also interested in personal and career growth, and enjoy meaningful work that gives them new skills and knowledge.

In addition to reasons why people initially volunteer for a project, there are important reasons why they continue with the program year after year—recognition, respect, and a sense of accomplishment. Volunteers must feel that their efforts are appreciated and recognized, that the group respects their skills, and that their work produces results. Keep these motivational factors in mind as you create your recruitment materials and as you develop a plan to recognize the efforts of long-term volunteers.

Before you recruit volunteers, you must first know how many the program requires in its “start-up” phase. For example, if you have enough monitoring equipment for 10 teams of volunteers and each team is to be comprised of 2 or 3 people, then your recruitment goal should be 20 to 30 volunteers. Some programs start with a small number of people who are invited personally to serve as volunteer monitors. Later, as the program grows and needs more assistance, all interested citizens can be invited to join the effort.

A first step in finding volunteers is to identify all organizations and individuals in the area who might want to participate in the project. Likely groups include civic associations, watershed associations, environmental advocacy groups, and government agencies. Individuals interested in volunteering might be waterfront property owners or commercial

and recreational users of the estuary. Retired citizens and disabled individuals can make outstanding volunteers. Schools in the watershed are also potential sources of volunteers. Speak with teachers at local elementary, middle, and high schools, community colleges, and universities.

Strive to recruit volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. This diversity helps establish the credibility of the program, ensures cooperation within the community, and provides the bonus of educating a greater variety of citizens in the community.

Certain types of individuals or groups may be more suitable than others for your particular project. If a primary goal of your monitoring program is education, then integrating students and youth groups into your program will help meet that goal. However, if your goal is year-round data collection using expensive and precise equipment, retired citizens may be more suitable and reliable. Some programs report a failure to integrate students and youth groups into long-term monitoring programs because of the commitment required and the need for summertime sampling.

Many towns and cities have volunteer centers or “hotlines” which serve to connect potential volunteers with programs. Inquire with towns located within the monitoring area to see if such volunteer centers exist. Other ways to reach potential volunteers are through your program Web site or sites managed by local communities. Local newspapers often will publish a “call for volunteers” as a community service.

A press release to local newspapers is an effective method to let the public know of your need for volunteers. See Chapter 3 for information on working with the media to publicize your program and its need for volunteers. An attractive brochure or flier describing the overall volunteer monitoring program can also be an effective recruitment tool.

Whether you promote by using a press release, brochure, or other method, be sure to include information on the objectives of the program and describe the benefits to the volunteer and to the estuary. Also explain what will be expected of recruits. Potential volunteers will need to know:

- monitoring site locations;
- project duration and length of commitment required;
- sampling frequency;
- required equipment (e.g., car, boat, sampling gear, etc.); and

- volunteer qualifications, if any (keep in mind that setting specific volunteer qualifications will limit participation in the program, possibly below an effective minimum level).

Short slide presentations that describe the program and show some of the sampling equipment and techniques can be a very effective recruitment tool. This will make it easier for potential volunteers to determine if they would be interested in volunteering and if they are capable of carrying out the activities requested of them. ■

Training Volunteers

A successful monitoring program requires well-trained volunteers. Few other aspects of the program are more important, so adequate time and money should be budgeted annually. Without volunteer training, usable, high-quality data cannot be obtained and volunteers will soon grow frustrated. Proper training provides the common ground necessary for a well-designed and scientifically valid data collection effort. Your program's volunteer coordinator plays an important, key role in the success of the entire effort.

Training citizen volunteers is time consuming and demanding. Nevertheless, successful training sessions are key to a long-term and effective monitoring program. It is well worth the effort to devote this time to the volunteers.

Introductory training ensures that all volunteers learn to collect and analyze samples in a consistent manner. This training will also introduce new volunteers to the program and its objectives, and will create a positive social climate for the volunteers. Such a climate enhances the exchange of information among participants and the volunteer coordinator. Training provides the

volunteer with the critical information necessary to “do the job right.”

Continuing education and retraining sessions, in which the volunteer coordinator reintroduces standard methodologies and presents new information, equipment, data results, or informative seminars, are also extremely useful. Such sessions:

- reinforce proper procedures;
- correct sloppy or imprecise techniques;
- facilitate resolution of equipment or logistics problems;
- allow volunteers to ask questions after familiarizing themselves with the field techniques;
- encourage a “team effort” attitude;
- make experienced volunteers feel integral to the program by encouraging



A volunteer collects a sample for bacteria testing. Practicing sampling techniques in the field is an effective way to reinforce what is learned in the classroom (photo by E. Ely).



Volunteers receive sampling instructions aboard a boat in California's Los Angeles River (photo by R. Ohrel).

Sample Job Description: Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator

The Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator has the following responsibilities:

- In consultation with state agency personnel and other interested parties, determine which waterbodies and which parameters in these waterbodies will be monitored.
- Recruit volunteers for each project. This will involve contacting interested groups, elected officials, and possibly businesses and industries in the area.
- Make arrangements for a place to conduct a training session and arrange a time to suit a majority of volunteer monitors. Train any volunteers who are unable to attend the training session.
- Keep in close touch with individuals at the beginning of project. Answer any questions volunteers may have. Read over each data sheet as it comes in and contact any monitors who seem to be having trouble. Send refill reagents and replacement equipment upon request.
- If required, enter all data in a suitable computer filing system. Carry out documentation and verification on the data. Provide plots of data to monitors and to data users. Carry out preliminary data interpretation. (Other staff or volunteers may carry out these management activities. If so, the volunteer monitoring coordinator will assume an advisory role.)
- Provide feedback to participants and data to users. This will involve writing progress reports and articles for publication in the program newsletter.
- Plan for and carry out quality control sessions.
- Prepare quarterly reports for the sponsoring agency.

(Excerpted and adapted from USEPA, 1990.)

them to supply valuable feedback to the instructors; and

- provide educational opportunities to the participants.

Volunteer training can be divided into three broad categories. Each has a different purpose, but together they should complement one another and make the training program well-rounded.

The categories are:

- introductory training to describe the program, teach standard methods, and motivate the volunteers;
- quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) training to ensure consistency and reliability of data collection; and

- motivational sessions that encourage information exchange, identify problems, and provide a social atmosphere for participants.

Although the different sessions will vary in content, the procedures necessary to present the material are fairly constant. Volunteer training may be broken down into five separate steps, which are described below.

Step 1: Describing the Volunteers' Duties

Prior to citizen involvement, the program manager must develop a detailed blueprint of each volunteer monitoring task. This "job description" spells out in sufficient detail every step a volunteer must complete to col-

lect data for each parameter.

The job description standardizes the data collection process and ensures that each volunteer samples in a consistent and acceptable manner. Consistency allows for comparisons of one section of an estuary to another section or between estuaries. Additionally, when the sampling methods are consistent, managers can more easily identify data outside the norm and evaluate whether they result from unusual conditions or faulty collection techniques.

There are some critical questions that need to be answered as you create standard operating procedures (SOPs), or written protocols to be used by the volunteers for each parameter that your program will monitor. The questions include what water quality parameters are to be tested and what level of quality is required for each parameter sampled. These questions are discussed in detail in Chapters 3, 5, and 6.

Many programs provide their volunteers with a handbook or manual that has been written specifically for their program and details the program SOPs. This written description provides each volunteer with a readily available reference that clearly describes how to sample while serving as a reminder of the correct methodology. Additionally, it helps to minimize the number of times the volunteer coordinator has to answer the same questions. Throughout the handbook, safety should be stressed (see Chapter 7 for information on volunteer safety).

The handbook should include the steps for each sampling task. Many of the sampling protocols summarized in this manual are suitable as basic task descriptions. The author of your program handbook can excerpt the descriptions from these chapters and embellish them with information unique to your program and its data collection tools and methods. A separate protocol should be drafted for each major parameter being measured.

Volunteer coordinators can also use their handbook to:

- recruit new volunteers;
- evaluate the ability of volunteers to complete the monitoring tasks accurately; and

- assist new programs in developing their own protocols.

Writing the monitoring tasks provides volunteer coordinators with the opportunity to fully evaluate the job at hand and improve potentially troublesome areas. Once the handbook is completed, volunteer coordinators and a few volunteers should test and refine the protocols under field conditions. Volunteer coordinators and key volunteers should reevaluate the handbook regularly—especially as the monitoring program expands to include more environmental parameters.

Step 2: Planning the Training

With a completed volunteer handbook, training sessions can be designed. Usually, programs will find that group sessions are the most cost-effective means of training the volunteers. In some situations, however, individual instruction may be the only feasible option.

Group sessions are preferred for all training classes because they are generally inexpensive, efficient, encourage interaction among the volunteers, and foster enthusiasm for the program. The training sessions should be scheduled according to the needs and availability of your volunteers. If your volunteers are mainly people who work during the day, schedule training sessions in the evenings or weekends. A better option would be to offer a variety of training times and let your volunteers pick the time that fits best into their schedules.

Training sessions are also the ideal time to outfit each new volunteer with a complete set of the required sampling equipment. Established volunteers may require additional equipment, blank data sheets, and refills of the reagents for their analysis kits.



Volunteers review laboratory techniques (photo by The Ocean Conservancy).

Training Sessions

A training session agenda should include:

- A presentation on goals and objectives of the project. The presentation should include the reasons for monitoring, historical information on the estuary, the problems it faces, expected uses of the volunteer data, and how the project will benefit volunteers, the community, and the state. Let volunteers know how the monitoring program will make differences in the region and throughout the watershed.
- A review of what is expected of the participants including how long the training session will last and the proposed length of the entire volunteer effort.
- Distribution of all equipment, a general explanation of its use, and a discussion of what equipment is particularly fragile, what constitutes equipment abuse, the replacement policy and cost, and the return of equipment at the end of the project.
- A thorough overview of all necessary safety requirements.
- An overview of the monitoring procedures, preferably with an accompanying slide show.
- A demonstration of proper use of monitoring equipment and sampling techniques. The trainer should demonstrate the proper methods and then circulate among the participants as they practice the procedures.
- An overview of proper preparation of samples for shipment.

(Excerpted and adapted from Ellett, 1993.)



A volunteer coordinator reviews instructions with a team of volunteers (photo by K. Register).

If each volunteer is expected to monitor many parameters, the instructor may need to schedule more than one session. Too much information presented at a single session may overwhelm and eventually discourage the volunteers.

Training volunteers for field sampling ideally takes place in the field. Group field trips, either for advanced training or special educational sessions, are wonderful means of motivating volunteers while teaching them additional skills. Furthermore, problems that might not arise during training conditions in a classroom

may emerge under less predictable field conditions. Most volunteers are quite enthusiastic about getting onto the water or seeing a new area of the estuary and they often approach their sampling with renewed enthusiasm after participating in a field trip.

When volunteers live over a widely scattered area, require assistance for a special problem, or are unable to attend a group session because of work or family obligations, a volunteer coordinator may need to meet with them individually. One-on-one training is certainly more time consuming and expensive, but it allows the instructor to focus on the particular problems or needs of a single volunteer. In return, this individual attention may help maintain the volunteer's dedication to the program.

Understanding Adults as Learners

Unlike schoolchildren who are trained by adult teachers, adults require a different tact when it comes to education. If some or all of your program volunteers are adults, then the trainer needs to appreciate the learning process for adults and design training programs accordingly. Four pertinent characteristics of adult learners are listed below, accompanied by suggested ways to address them during the training process.

- **Adults are mature and need to control their learning.**

Traditional classroom learning gives the teacher the power while the student is passive, but adult training should allow the students to have a key role in directing the learning process. When beginning a training session, present your objectives and session agenda to the volunteers. Give them an opportunity to discuss and adjust the plan. Get to know your volunteers before or during the training. Find out why they are participating in the monitoring program and try to design their “job” to satisfy their interests.

- **Adult learning requires a climate that is collaborative, respectful, mutual, and informal.**

Adults bring vast personal experiences to the learning process. It is essential that the trainer recognize and use this experience. *Minimize lectures.* Retention is increased when we become actively involved in the learning process. Training sessions should be paced to allow time for volunteers to hear about the monitoring program, perform the techniques themselves, and then reflect on the learning by asking and answering questions. *Provide opportunities for group work.* Use your experienced volunteers to mentor newer volunteers. *Reinforce your instruction* by designing problem-solving exercises for groups to work on. Traditional classroom teaching assumes that students learn well by listening, reading, and writing, but in reality people have a variety of learning styles. Some people learn best through logic and problem solving; others prefer to learn through pictures, charts, and maps. Some work best on their own, while others work best in groups. Learning styles are very individualized, and group exercises can be designed to provide a variety of learning environments. *Encourage volunteers to share experiences and expertise,* and provide them with additional learning materials.

- **Adults need to test their learning as they go along, rather than receive background theory and general information.**

Adults need clear connections between content and application so that they can anticipate how they will use their learning. Start your training session with kits and techniques, and save the lecture on ecology for later. Let them know how their data will be used, and ask them what they think needs to be done to improve the estuary. Have them discuss how the monitoring will help them achieve project and personal goals. Provide time in the training to discuss how the volunteers will use their new knowledge. Remember that when volunteers are in the field, curious onlookers may ask them questions about what they are doing and why. Use role-playing to build their confidence so that they can educate their communities about the resources they are monitoring. Use other volunteers as trainers, and provide opportunities for volunteers to take on new challenges.

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(Understanding Adults . . . continued)

• **Adults expect performance improvements to result from their learning.**

Adult learning needs to be clearly focused in the present and be “problem centered” rather than “subject centered.” Help volunteers evaluate your training and their own performance. Train volunteers in groups. Encourage them to set goals for themselves and then mentor each other to achieve those goals.

(Excerpted and adapted from Kerr, 1997.)

Step 3: Presenting the Training

A well-conceived plan for instruction along with simple handouts is key to a useful training presentation. Instructors should make the most effective use of participants’ time. Volunteers, like most students, appreciate a well-organized and smoothly paced class. Four major steps constitute an effective and lively training session: preparation, presentation, demonstration, and review.

Preparation

Preparation for class is critical. The sampling protocols provide a basic framework for the initial training session. With the basic information in hand, the instructor must then tailor the lesson to the audience. The instructor should try to anticipate those portions of the lesson that may cause confusion and be prepared to clarify these areas. Volunteers should be invited to ask questions throughout the session.

Instructors should make appropriate use of audiovisual materials to enhance the presentation. All equipment should be in the room at the start of the session, in good working condition, and ready for use. Slides of the estuary and of volunteers in action are a good teaching device and tend to hold an audience’s attention.

Presentation

Knowing the material thoroughly and having the information well-organized are critical to an effective presentation. Ensure a successful session by using these tips:

- Be enthusiastic about the subject! Enthusiasm inspires dedication.
- Establish a good rapport with the audience.
- Get the audience involved in the talk and keep the presentation lively.
- Utilize visual aids.
- Speak loudly enough to be heard throughout the room and enunciate clearly.
- Be humorous.
- Use eye contact.
- Encourage questions and comments.
- Use anecdotes throughout the presentation.
- Maintain good posture and positive body language.

Volunteers with no background in science may require additional explanation or assistance so that they understand the importance of high quality data collection methods and the proper use of scientific equipment. Although separate sessions for experienced and untrained volunteers are preferable, some instructors may elect to have a single session with experienced volunteers helping those who are new to the program.

If the pace drags because one or two volunteers are slow, the rest of the volunteers may quickly become annoyed and bored. Slower students may require individualized attention at a later date.

Demonstration

Two types of demonstration are effective training tools: one in which the instructor shows the techniques to the volunteers and another in which the students practice the outlined procedures under the watchful eye of the instructor. An effective teacher can incorporate both into a training session.

The instructor should demonstrate the sampling protocols. Viewing the execution of a procedure is more meaningful than simply reading the instructions. Once the volunteers are familiar with the techniques, they can then repeat the procedures under the tutelage of the instructor. These practice sessions can take place in the field or classroom and give volunteers the confidence to transfer these newly learned skills to their own monitoring site.

Review

A good learning session should end with a review of the material. Summarizing reinforces the salient points and assists the volunteers in retaining the information. As in the training exercise, volunteers should be invited to ask questions during the review. At the close of the session, the instructor can inform participants about upcoming events and future training opportunities and reiterate the importance of citizen monitoring and data collection.

Step 4: Evaluating the Training

High quality data reflect successful volunteer training. To ensure that the sessions are effective and successful, include written evaluations as an integral part of the training process. While an instructor may feel that the sessions are adequate, only the volunteers know how much they have learned and retained.

Evaluation of the training should include an assessment of:

- training techniques and style;
- information presented;

- classroom atmosphere; and
- use of handouts and audiovisual aids.

Volunteers may provide feedback at the end of the sessions. The true test of an effective session, however, is how well the volunteers perform in the field. A follow-up evaluation form, sent to participants after a few weeks of sampling, may pinpoint any weaknesses in the presentation.

Members of the monitoring program may also want to accompany volunteers into the field and examine their sampling techniques as they work unassisted. Such spot checks can identify areas in which the volunteers are encountering difficulties. It is important to explain to volunteers that these observation sessions are an important part of the quality control that is needed for high quality data.

If large numbers of volunteers are experiencing problems in carrying out the sampling protocols, you may want to revise the format of the training sessions or have a new instructor take over. The evaluation process should be ongoing to ensure that all the sessions consistently meet a high standard.

Step 5: Follow-Up Training/Providing Motivation and Feedback

While the initial training sessions are designed to give volunteers all the basic skills to successfully complete their sampling, training does not stop there. Follow-up advanced training sessions, either through one-on-one interaction or with a group of volunteers, is imperative to keep volunteers enthusiastic, motivated, and collecting good data. In some monitoring programs, volunteer coordinators conduct site visits shortly after the training session in order to spend time with each volunteer personally. In addition to building a closer relationship between the volunteer and the coordinator, these visits can answer questions about the monitoring protocol.

One focus for advanced training sessions should be quality control (QC), which is extremely important in all monitoring

programs. The challenge of volunteer program managers is to carry out QC exercises that assess the precision and accuracy of the data being collected, but are also fun and interesting for the volunteers. Experienced volunteer coordinators recommend turning these quality control sessions into educational and social opportunities for the volunteers, while making sure that volunteers understand why QC is important. For more on QC, see Chapter 5.

The first QC session should be held about 3-4 months after sampling begins to make sure that all monitors are sampling and analyzing in a consistent fashion and to answer any questions. Thereafter, two QC sessions should be held each year if sampling goes on year-round. If sampling is carried out on a seasonal basis, training sessions for new monitors and retraining for program veterans can be held at the beginning of the sampling period, with a QC session scheduled for the middle of the season.

Volunteers should be expected to attend all scheduled sessions. If a volunteer cannot attend at least one session a year, the volunteer coordinator (or a trained assistant) should make a site visit and evaluate the sampling procedures of the volunteer.

Quality control exercises should be as interesting as possible. As two options, attendees can:

- carry out the tests on the same water sample with their own equipment the way they do it at their site, filling out and submitting a data collection form with their results; or
- read and record results from previously set up laboratory equipment and kits, similar to a classroom laboratory practical exam.

Data collection forms with the recorded results are submitted independently. The results can then be compared to determine bias. Results from these sessions also measure how well the group members perform and how precisely they measure the characteristics and constituents required.

In addition to ongoing training sessions that stress quality control, monitoring programs should offer individualized training to volunteers who require it. Though less time efficient than training a group of people, it has many other benefits. For example, an individual session:

- permits the volunteer to ask questions particular to a site;
- allows the instructor to solve specific problems in the field;
- indicates to the volunteer that his/her data are important;
- gives the instructor feedback on training effectiveness;
- enhances communication between the volunteer coordinator and the volunteer;
- motivates the volunteer; and
- provides a forum for introducing new methods.

Continuous communication with volunteers is critical. In addition to going into the field with specific volunteers, the volunteer coordinator should also consider phoning other volunteers who may not require face-to-face contact. A phone call lets volunteers know that the volunteer coordinator is interested in their progress and gives them an opportunity to ask questions. Informal gatherings, such as potluck dinners and slide shows, also give volunteer coordinators an opportunity to check on the progress of the participants and answer questions. Newsletters or updates by way of e-mail are also excellent ways to keep volunteers informed.

The success of the program is highly dependent on maintaining volunteer motivation and enthusiasm. An apathetic volunteer will likely not collect good data and may drop out of the program. The next section provides suggestions for retaining volunteers. ■

Backup Monitors

A program should have a backup monitor policy in place to assure data collection continuity. A backup volunteer can sample at a site when the primary monitor is sick, on vacation, or for some other reason unable to sample.

The backup should be trained as rigorously as the primary volunteer so that the data meet high quality standards. Many programs have strict backup policies in place, with requirements similar to the following:

- The backup monitor must be trained by the volunteer coordinator and attend a minimum of one quality control session every six months.
- The backup volunteer must be familiar with all the sites that he or she will monitor.
- The backup may monitor at any site but must use the proper data sheet and the kit assigned to the primary volunteer of the site.

Retaining Volunteers

Finding qualified volunteers and training them takes work, so losing volunteers on a regular basis can be a drain on resources. Your group should have a plan to ensure that volunteers continue to feel that supporting your efforts are worth their time. Show them that the benefits of volunteering outweigh the costs. Satisfied volunteers will become advocates for your mission and will help recruit additional support. Successful monitoring programs devote significant resources to activities designed to motivate their volunteers.

Communicate

Keep direct lines of communication open at all times using the telephone, personal memos, and/or some form of newsletter. Some monitoring groups use e-mail or Web sites to keep volunteers informed. Be easily accessible for questions and requests. Give volunteers a phone number where they can always leave a message, then respond to calls promptly. Ask for their advice on general administrative issues, bring them into the

proofreading process, and help them develop a sense of shared ownership of the program.

Recognize the Effort

Give volunteers praise and recognition—it is the psychological equivalent of a salary!

Recognize their accomplishments through awards, letters of appreciation, publicity, and certificates. If at all possible, recognize the expertise of experienced volunteers by encouraging them to shoulder increased responsibilities such as becoming team leaders or coordinators, carrying out more advanced tests, or helping with data analyses. Also, as you keep the local media abreast of the findings of the monitoring effort, be sure to include the names of key volunteers.

Offer Educational Opportunities

Provide volunteers with educational opportunities so that they can continue to “grow.” Have meetings and regular workshops where guest speakers can explain environmental sampling techniques or provide

information on environmental policies pertinent to the sampling effort.

Use the Data Your Volunteers Collect

Nothing discourages volunteers more than seeing that their data are not being used. Simple analyses and attractive displays of volunteer data should be prepared and sent to volunteers as well as to the data users. A Web site is an excellent place to present volunteer data.

Keep volunteers informed about all uses of their data. If they are contributing to a long-term database, prepare annual data summaries showing the current condition of the estuary compared to its previous condition. If the data are used for acute problem identification, send the volunteers information on areas where problems have been identified. If the data are being used to supplement state reports, send volunteers copies of the report. These actions

will foster continued interest in the program and serve to educate and inform the volunteers about the conditions of the estuary. For more information on using data, see Chapter 8.

Be Flexible, Open, and Realistic

Start with a small program that you can easily handle. Synchronize the monitoring period to coincide with the period you can commit to supporting the volunteers. When starting a program, be frank about the chances for continued support and inform the group if resources disappear, or might disappear soon. Work with the strengths and interests of your volunteers and search for ways to make the most of your available resources. Talk with volunteer coordinators of similar programs elsewhere to learn new ways to handle obstacles. ■

Tips on Volunteer Motivation and Incentives

Successful monitoring programs have developed many methods to motivate both new and long-term volunteers. The following are tips and hints for increasing volunteer participation and keeping volunteers motivated:

- Remember that you are competing with other organizations for volunteers and their time.
- Volunteers need a sense of fulfillment. Match volunteer interests and skills with appropriate jobs. Invite top volunteers to take on leadership responsibilities. Experienced volunteers can become “captains” to help with training and organization. Create different “layers” of volunteers.
- Make person-to-person contact.
- Make it easy.
- Make it fun (for example, send a thank-you note saying, “You are a lifesaver!” and include some Lifesavers candy).
- If recruiting volunteers from schools or colleges, the key is getting a committed teacher to help coordinate.
- Tell volunteers “what’s in it for them.” Inform them about local water quality problems and their ownership in the problems/solutions. Show the human connection, and how their efforts are helping to solve problems.

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- Present certificates to volunteers when they complete technical training in monitoring procedures.
- Be prepared for your volunteers. Have training sessions organized and equipment ready.
- Don't sign up volunteers if you don't have work or equipment for them.
- Recruit and train backup volunteers. Some programs recommend having three volunteers per team, plus backup volunteers.
- Re-certify volunteers every year.
- Get emergency contact information for all volunteers.
- Recognize that volunteers know their communities. Encourage them to share what they have learned with schools, press, etc.
- Conduct regular orientation and training sessions.
- Know that some volunteers have skills beyond serving as monitors (e.g., graphic design, public relations, making other contacts). Ask them what other talents they would be willing to share.
- Have your own liability waivers and keep in mind that some state parks, etc. require that their waivers also be signed. (See Chapter 3 for more information on waivers.)
- Keep equipment in backpacks, boxes, or fabric tote-bags for volunteers to use.
- Build into your volunteer program the capacity for feedback and true volunteer involvement.
- Reward volunteers after work sessions, sampling seasons, or other milestones with a party or other celebration, canoe trips, certificates, etc.
- Show volunteers and board members the impact their efforts have made by taking them on boat trips or field trips.
- Some communities sponsor awards, banquets, and other events to recognize outstanding volunteers. Nominate your volunteers for these honors.
- Thank the volunteers, then thank them again.

(Excerpted and adapted from Calessio, 1999; Closson, 1999; Davies, 1999; Fitzgibbons, 1999; Gerosa, 1999; and Sims, 1999.)

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