

# Building Credibility – the Key to Successful Volunteer Monitoring Programs

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

**Workshop Description:**

Water quality monitoring data are typically gathered to support decision-making, whether it is for encouraging waterfront residents to convert lawns into vegetated buffers, for enacting local ordinances to strengthen wetlands protection or improved storm water management, or for regulatory action. In order to be useful, monitoring data must provide relevant information, *and* the data must be credible, which usually means that the information is documented and defensible.

This workshop will open with a discussion of the life cycle of volunteer monitoring programs (e.g., how and why programs form, how they grow and build credibility, and how they may end). This will provide participants a central platform from which to discuss various aspects of data quality. Components of this interactive workshop will include:

- An overview of quality assurance and quality control steps programs can follow to help substantiate the credibility of their data,
- A summary of existing data credibility laws, what these laws entail, and their potential impacts to volunteer monitoring programs,
- A compendium of volunteer vs. professional studies,
- Case studies from a variety of projects in which volunteers assisted with data collection for scientific research projects, and
- Discussions of data quality issues relevant to workshop participants.

This workshop will be geared toward not only volunteer monitoring program coordinators, but to anyone who may be interested in tapping into the vast wealth of water quality data available through, or working these citizen scientists.