

Project Summary

Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Project Title: Developing and Enhancing National Water Quality Databases for Clean Water Act Integrated Reporting

Discipline: Natural
Type of Project: Technical Assistance
Funding Agency: National Park Service
Other Partners/Cooperators: Colorado State University
Effective Dates: 8/13/2012 - 9/30/2014
Funding Amount: \$275,215

Investigators and Agency Representative:

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Project Abstract: The management of physical, chemical, and biological water quality in the nation's waters is delegated to the states and territories (hereto after referred to as simply 'states') under the Clean Water Act. States, overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are responsible for promulgating and enforcing water quality standards designed to ensure that all waters meet their state-designated beneficial uses. The cornerstone for making the determination of whether waters meet state-designated beneficial uses is the collection and assessment of water quality monitoring results (i.e. water quality data). Given the variable nature of water quality in response to natural and anthropogenic influences across time and space, states never have sufficient data to completely assess all their waters. One way to mitigate this data shortage is by states, federal and other governmental agencies, watershed organizations, and the private sector sharing water quality data. Typically, water quality data can be used for purposes beyond those for which they were originally collected. The mechanism to facilitate this interagency and public/private data sharing is a common water quality data exchange format and database. The database from which most states seek to obtain data for their assessment activities is the EPA's publicly-accessible STORET Data Warehouse (<http://www.epa.gov/storet/>).

The National Park Service (NPS) collects a variety of physical, chemical, and biological water quality data for various purposes that states and others can use to help manage water quality or conduct research on aquatic ecosystems. Unfortunately, these data don't help the states and others if they remain only in NPS data systems. By archiving NPS collected water quality data in the STORET Data Warehouse, states, researchers, and the public can obtain the data for their own assessment, scientific, or other purposes. As required by the Clean Water Act, states can use the data to assess the status and trends of impaired, threatened, and outstanding national/state resource waters as well as waters lacking such designations. By sharing water quality data collected by the NPS for its own purposes with the states and other organizations, a greater public benefit is achieved.

Outcomes with Completion Dates: September 30, 2014

Keywords: Clean Water Act, National Water Quality Database, National Park Service, Water Resources Division, Colorado State University