



March 2003



## Summary of Training Volunteers Program Level Inquiry

**University of Rhode Island**

**University of Wisconsin**

The program-level inquiry for the Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring National Facilitation Grant was sent to 26 program coordinators, operating 27 Cooperative Extension (CE) sponsored/co-sponsored programs in 25 states or territories. Inquiries were completed for 21 programs as of June 21, 2002, which represents a 77% response rate to the inquiry.

### Training Facilities and Resources

All but one program utilize field-training sessions to educate and train their volunteers. Seventeen programs have a training manual and the same number provide training in the classroom for their monitors. Face to face training is preferred, with only four programs using videotapes during training sessions. Three other programs indicated they have a video available, but that it is not part of the training sessions. Other types of training or training resources offered by programs include site visits by staff, ongoing quality assurance training, conferences, games, and laboratory instruction.

### Hours of Training Provided

The number of hours that volunteers are trained varies considerably among programs. New volunteers receive a median of eight hours of training; the range is 0-28 hours. In 16 of the 21 programs, returning volunteers also receive training. In these programs, they receive a median of 2.5 hours and up to 20 hours of training per year. Some programs offer advanced topics training sessions for monitors. One program coordinator noted the amount of training time offered returning volunteers was based on needs of the monitors.

### Training Content

Figure 1 summarizes training topics for new and returning volunteers. Training sessions for new monitors typically cover background information about the monitoring program and monitoring protocols/methods. Sixteen programs include training about safety issues, ecosystem ecology, and quality assurance and quality control issues. Site access procedures and regulations are discussed at training sessions of 12 programs. Only one-third of the programs train new volunteers in data analysis procedures, but three-quarters explain how the data these volunteers generate will be used.

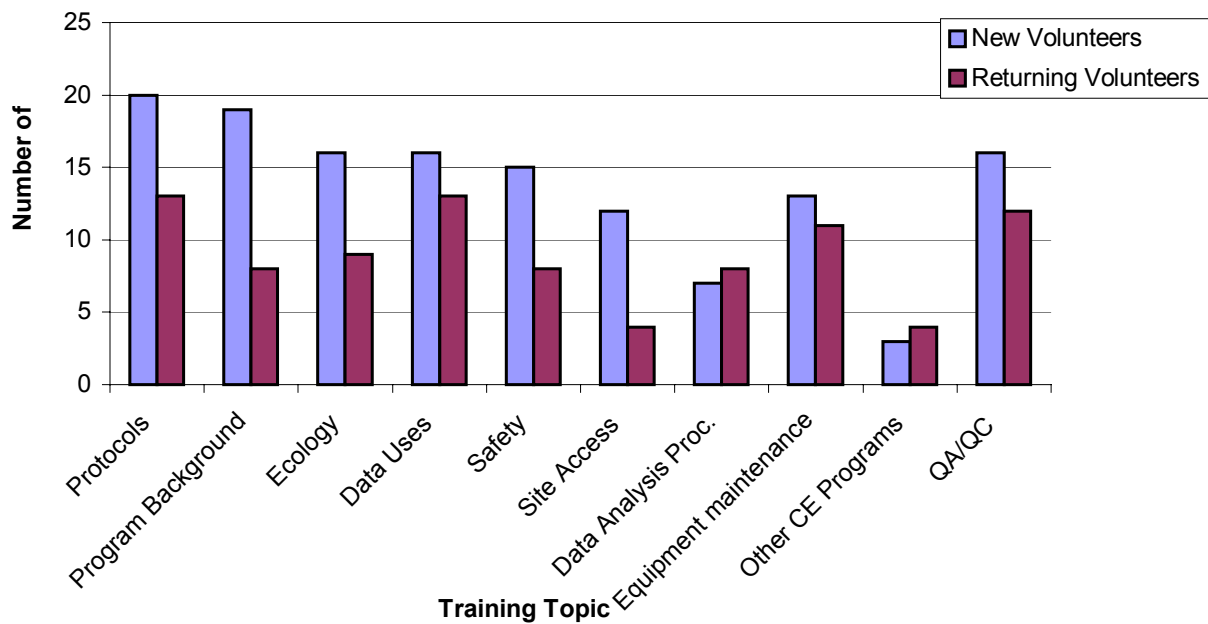


Figure 1: Training topics for new and returning volunteers

Other training includes advanced sampling options (specific to program), information about watersheds and contaminant transport, data entry procedures for online database, and integration of program activities into school settings.

### Leading the Training

In 18 of the 20 responding programs, paid program staff conduct training sessions. In addition, scientists or monitoring professionals conduct or assist with training sessions in 15 of the programs. Eight programs include guest presenters. Six programs utilize the resources of returning volunteers in training sessions, while 7 programs train volunteers to be trainers. Students assist with training sessions for 4 programs. Americorps volunteers and youth apprentices (ages 10-15) also act as trainers for one program each.

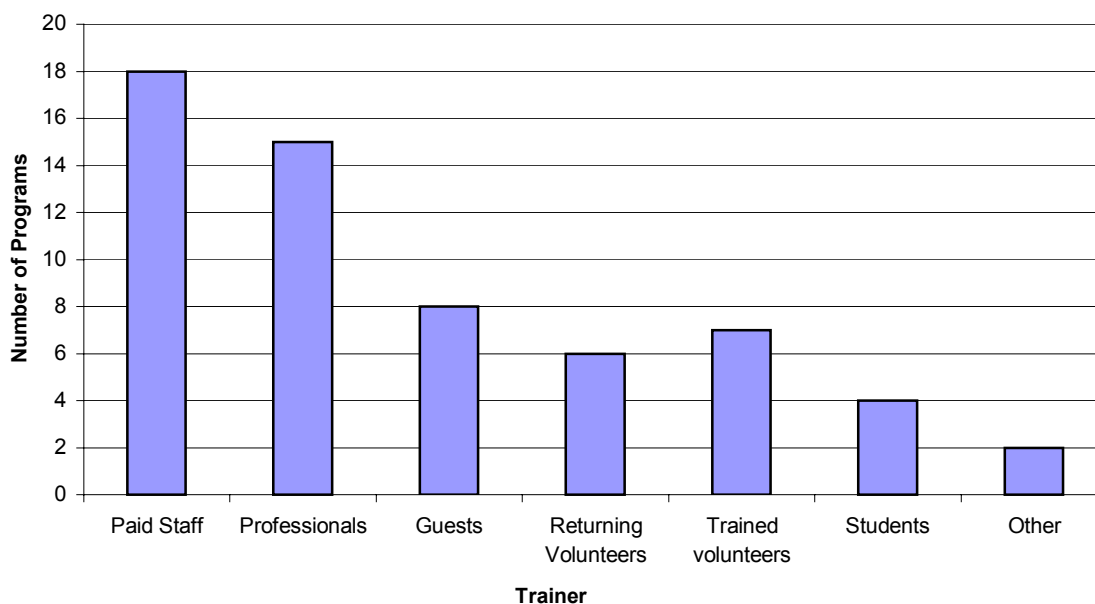


Figure 2: Numbers of volunteer water quality monitoring programs that utilize certain types of trainers.

### Exams and Follow-up

Very few programs (2 out of 20) require their volunteers to take exams following training sessions. One of those has an exam only for those who receive advanced training.

Telephoning was the most often utilized form of contact with volunteers following training sessions, with 15 programs indicating they use this method of contact. Visiting sites (13 programs) and sending newsletters to volunteers (12 programs) are both frequently used methods of contacting volunteers as well. Follow up sample collection, direct mailings, and the World Wide Web are utilized by 9 of the responding programs. Quality assurance sessions are offered by just 8 of the programs as a form of follow up after training sessions.

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