
ENHANCING COMMUNITY-BASED AQUATIC MONITORING: WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Two Collaborative Workshops
Held in Dettah, March 2010 and in Yellowknife, February 2011



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May 4, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Background

Community-level participation and leadership are central to the long-term success of aquatic resource monitoring programs in the NWT. Local residents have a unique knowledge and understanding of aquatic systems that add great value to long-term monitoring projects. Increasing development pressures for pipeline and road construction, as well the demand for governments to deliver monitoring programs more efficiently in light of tightening budgets also point to the benefits of greater collaboration with communities. Two complementary workshops were held in March 2010 and February 2011 to recommend specific ways to promote such collaboration.

Goal of Workshops

Build a foundation of mutual trust, understanding and communication on which to build better aquatic resource monitoring programs that make the best use of government expertise and community-based knowledge.

Objectives

Shared objectives of both workshops were to:

1. Understand the key issues and programs related to aquatic monitoring in the NWT.
2. Identify ways to improve collaboration among all those involved in community monitoring.

Participants

Both workshops were attended by key government and community partners actively involved in aquatic resource monitoring in the southern NWT. Community representatives included program administrators, resource managers, leaders, youth and elders. Participants to the March 2010 workshop included:

- Akaitcho Territory Government
- Dehcho First Nation
- Environment Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Indian and North Affairs
- Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT
- Aurora College

The second workshop held in February 2011 brought most of the same government representatives together with members of the:

- North Slave Métis Alliance
- NWT Métis Association

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP RESULTS

Issues

Participants at both workshops identified key obstacles to community-based monitoring. These fell into five general categories:

- ***Capacity and Training***
 - Insufficient training and education opportunities
 - Proposal writing processes are disconnected from one program to the next
 - Heavy administrative demands from multiple funding sources
- ***Planning***
 - Disconnect between local, regional & federal planning priorities
 - Very little long-term planning at any level
- ***Coordination***
 - Lack of inter- and intra-departmental coordination (working in “silos”)
 - Duplication of efforts
- ***Communication and information sharing***
 - Lack of regular dialogue between government and communities
 - Little communication, reporting, or feedback from academic researchers
 - Poor link between traditional knowledge and conventional science
 - Difficult to access government experts and funding
 - Government programs not sensitive to local needs and differences
 - Lack of baseline information
 - Widely scattered or inaccessible data
 - Poor integration of traditional knowledge and socio-economic factors
- ***Funding***
 - Lack of phased, multi-year funding
 - Lack of continuity from year to year and program to program
 - Few opportunities for long-term employment in communities
 - Funding often tied to specific development projects, hence reactive
 - Lack of long-term investment in aquatic monitoring & research
 - Staff cutbacks and shrinking budgets

Recommended Actions

- ***Government***
 - Integrate the administration of monitoring programs to better coordinate proposal writing, reporting processes, timelines, and funding.
 - Create a “one-window” funding committee that could receive a Letter of Intent from communities and, in turn, match their projects to the appropriate funding sources (as is now done for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency or CanNor).
 - Develop formal commitments & MOUs among monitoring departments to improve

collaboration among themselves.

- Explore options for adapting a Multiproject Environmental Agency model to community monitoring to improve coordination and build capacity.
- Allocate funding for long-term community-based monitoring.
- Establish a widely accessible portal for communities to store & share data, reports.
- Develop a NWT-wide “who’s who” chart of aquatic resource monitoring contacts.

• **Communities**

- Develop long-term community-based plans that form the centrepiece of funding proposals for all government and industry monitoring programs.
- Do a needs assessment to identify monitoring priorities and gaps.
- Target monitoring priorities to the needs of decision-makers.
- Create a community-based monitoring industry supported by consistent government funds, training programs, capacity building, and strong partnerships.
- Increase networking & sharing among communities and agencies of “what works”.

