Session Information

Session VI – Maine Water Quality Data: Overview, Availability and Challenges

Session chair: Linda Bacon, Maine DEP

Oral Presentation

Title: Finding the Maine Story in Huge, Cumbersome National Monitoring Datasets

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What's a manager, analyst, or concerned citizen to do with the complex datasets generated by State and Federal monitoring efforts? Is it possible to use such information to address Maine's environmental issues without having a degree in informatics and statistics? This presentation will briefly review several large national USEPA monitoring programs that have evaluated water quality in Maine and elsewhere over the past decade, including the National Coastal Assessment (NCA), the National Lakes Assessment (NLA), and ongoing National Aquatic Resource Surveys (NARS). We'll highlight the benefits and weaknesses of these large-scale programs that feature random site selection, consistent evaluation metrics, and limited sampling activity. In particular, we'll appraise how well such programs address state-scale issues, and present examples of how NCA and NLA data have been used by Northeastern states. Additionally, we'll review an approach under development that uses the familiar Excel spreadsheet to deliver, view, and interpret NLA water chemistry data. This easy-to-use tool generates maps reflecting user-designated condition categories, weighted statistics, weighted cumulative distribution function (CDF) plots, and other graphics. Ideally, the tool will promote exploration and interpretation of the NLA data, and place the condition of Maine's lakes in regional context. As we are in the early stages of developing this and similar tools, we solicit feedback and suggestions regarding this approach.

Keywords: estuary; lake; water and sediment quality; data exploratory tool

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