

Volunteer Monitoring Lessons Learned

Organization: Arlington County DES

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Abstract Title: Training Managers by Ear and Volunteers by Sight

Monitoring programs need to create opportunities for volunteer feedback, input, and program ownership. Strong relationships, transparent operations, and good listening and observational skills are a must for a successful program that will generate buy-in from both new and veteran volunteers.

Organization: Friends of the Shenandoah River

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Abstract Title: Friends of the Shenandoah River: 24 Years of Successful Collaboration and Partnerships Working Together to Preserve and Protect a Treasured Resource

Since 1989 the Friends of the Shenandoah River (FOSR) has been successfully calibrating with state, federal and local government as well as citizens in their endeavor to protect and restore the aquatic environment of one of Virginia's greatest natural resources, the Shenandoah River. In 1994, the FOSR entered into a mutually beneficial partnership with Shenandoah University. SU graciously offered space for the FOSR to house and operate their lab. FOSR and SU also works collaboratively to provide students with internship opportunities and an additional resource for students working on research projects or those wishing to explore opportunities within both the laboratory and environmental career areas. Many of the FOSR lab interns have been successful in finding jobs in large part because of the experience they gained through their internship with FOSR. In addition environmental organizations are aware of the quality of work the FOSR lab produces and the strict protocols FOSR follows. The most important and successful collaboration the FOSR has had is the dedication of the citizen volunteer water-quality monitors from the seven counties in the Shenandoah River basin. Many of the volunteers represent other like organizations such as Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, Friends of the Middle River, and Page Valley Citizen Group. Collectively they form the Friends of the Shenandoah River Cooperative Volunteer Water Monitoring Program. Recently the FOSR's monitoring program has expanded into Jefferson County West Virginia. One of the landmark achievements of the FOSR's Cooperative Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program is the inclusion of the water quality data in the VA DEQ 305(b)/ 303(d) Reports submitted to the US EPA as required by the Clean Water Act and related federal regulations. Through collaboration and partnership an entire watershed's long-term water quality is being documented by a volunteer-based non-profit organization, Friends of the Shenandoah River.