



New Statewide Water Quality Initiative

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation awarded a \$160,000 two-year grant to support a statewide citizen science water quality monitoring project to New River Conservancy on behalf of multiple non-profits and agencies across the state.

Agencies participating in the formative stage of this initiative include NatureServe, NC Watershed Stewardship Network, Carolina Wetlands Association, NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Morehead Planetarium & Science Center, NC Division of Water Resources, Water Resources Research Institute of the UNC System, UNC Institute for the Environment, River Network, and New River Conservancy.

The need for a citizen science water quality monitoring program was highlighted at the Water Education Summit in Asheville in September 2014, during a panel discussion regarding successful volunteer biomonitoring programs and the opportunities for a statewide approach for monitoring. Panel participants were extremely receptive to the idea of a statewide program for NC. They recognized 1) monitoring and 2) database management as important tools that need to be better developed if we are to more effectively address water quality and biodiversity concerns in our region's watersheds.

Recognizing the value of monitoring programs as effective tools towards reaching conservation action, the development of a statewide monitoring program is a prime opportunity to improve (or at least maintain) NC waters, especially in an era of decreased government funding for monitoring.

“NRC is honored and humbled to serve as the fiscal agent for this ambitious statewide effort that will ensure consistent high quality data is collected to help inform citizens and agencies. Watershed protection and restoration begins with a solid understanding of the state of the water quality,” said George Santucci, President of the New River Conservancy.

The grant will enable the partners to develop statewide standards and a core data model. It will also develop a database and web portal that will accept, display and store data which can be shared by all state and local partners and will make water quality data more accessible and useful. This project will lead to a more engaged, informed and involved citizenry regarding water quality issues.

We're currently seeking input from groups who are currently monitoring water quality. **Please go to www.ncaquaticdatahub.org to learn more about the project and participate in the survey.**

