

# Lake Michigan



## Monitoring Coordination Council

### Workgroup Progress

(November 2000)

The following short-term workgroups were identified and defined at the Council meeting on September 22, 1999. These workgroups were established to meet short-term goals (six months to one year) and provide the Council with greater definition and focus for the long term. As the workgroups meet and discuss the details of their goals and tasks, the members may further refine the scope and mission of each workgroup. This summary provides the original mission of the workgroup along with the progress made over the last year. A set of possible workgroup discussion topics are also included.

#### 1. Data Inventory and Assessment

**Mission:** This group will assist in isolating issues and key contacts for conducting an inventory and assessment of monitoring in the Lake Michigan basin. An inventory of the monitoring efforts at the federal, state, and local levels (including volunteer monitoring) has been started by the Great Lakes Commission with funding from U.S. EPA's Lake Michigan Team. This group will assist the Commission to ensure full coverage of the basin, suggest important contacts, provide advice on database and website design to enhance usage, and assist in the assessment of the inventory results.

**Progress to Date:** The Council provided input to the Commission as they completed the inventory of monitoring programs in the Lake Michigan basin. The Commission completed its initial work to compile and analyze the inventory, and the findings can be found in the final report at: [www.glc.org/monitoring](http://www.glc.org/monitoring). The Commission is now developing the inventory database for access over the Internet.

##### Discussion Topics:

- < What are the gaps in the monitoring inventory?
- < Does the inventory report provide a sufficient summary to better understand where monitoring coordination can be most effective?
- < How should the online database be designed for greatest value to Council members?

#### 2. Monitoring Objectives

**Mission:** This group will define key questions and driving forces (e.g. TMDLs, 305b reports, Clean Water Action Plan, etc.), and determine which questions are being answered and which are not. One potential project would be to analyze the monitoring inventory underway or survey Council members to compile a list of general research questions that organizations are attempting to answer with monitoring data. Determining where research objective compatibilities and incompatibilities exist will be an important function of this group.

**Progress to Date:** The workgroup has engaged in several discussions regarding different objectives and how they can be aligned. A survey relating to these objectives and other aspects of monitoring programs was distributed to the general membership, but the response was very low. The group is interested in comparing objectives from the monitoring inventory, once it is online. A paper was drafted for review at the fall meeting titled, "Considerations for Development of a Coordinated Water Quality Monitoring Network for Lake Michigan."

##### Discussion Topics:

- < What direction should this workgroup take? Should the group merge with the Watershed Pilot workgroup and develop strategies for monitoring networks, or should further steps be taken to assess monitoring objectives?
- < What are the reactions to the "Considerations" paper? Can this be developed into a general guidance document for the Council, if so, are there specific aspects of the document that should be pursued next? Can it be adapted for use with other types of monitoring networks?

### 3. Benefit Analysis and Outreach

**Mission:** This group will collect examples of successful monitoring coordination efforts and highlight the benefits of collaboration and coordination of regional monitoring efforts. This work should encourage support for further Council efforts and establish benchmarks. A short report describing coordination efforts in the Lake Michigan basin, detailing the benefits of coordinated monitoring and presenting successful case studies would be a good product for this group. Development of a benefits report could go a long way toward ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders in Lake Michigan monitoring.

**Progress to Date:** This workgroup held a number of discussions about monitoring coordination examples and decided to include these in a brochure that the Council could distribute to throughout the basin to encourage greater support and participation from monitoring organizations. The Council website continues to be updated with new materials. The workgroup decided to host a session at the next International Association of Great Lakes Researchers (IAGLR) Conference, on June 10-14, 2001. It also is working toward developing a regional Great Lakes monitoring conference for the Fall of 2001.

#### Discussion Topics:

- < What speakers should be recruited for the IAGLR session?
- < How can the regional conference be moved forward?
- < How can outreach efforts be improved or focussed?

### 4. Watershed Pilots

This will mostly be a state effort to select local collaborative efforts that could be instructive for regional work. The states themselves will select projects currently underway in their states which have extensive monitoring components. It will be important to search out projects that use monitoring data from a variety of sources. These projects can be assessed for lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful monitoring collaborations, as well as recommendations for improvements. Other alternative pilots may include work on watersheds that straddle state boundaries (e.g. the St. Joseph River watershed).

**Progress to Date:** Following a number of discussions, this group agreed to focus on elements that could be carried forward from the Lake Michigan Mass Balance project. Glenn Warren, Great Lakes National Program Office, was invited to speak at the Fall meeting to address this topic. Further, a paper was developed, based on the "Considerations" paper, to offer a pilot surface water quality monitoring network. This paper is entitled "A Proposed Surface Water Quality Monitoring Network for the Lake Michigan Watershed."

#### Discussion Topics:

- < What is the future direction of this workgroup?
- < Based on the Mass Balance presentation, what elements can be carried forward as a monitoring network?
- < Can the surface water network be developed for the Lake Michigan basin? What are the next steps?
- < Can this approach work for other types of monitoring? What are some important differences?