



Citizen-Based Monitoring Network of Wisconsin

Citizen Lake Watch

WDNR support for citizen-based monitoring programs

by Michelle Washebek

Citizen-based monitoring means citizens working with scientists to monitor our natural resources. Anyone can do it, regardless of his or her education and experience. When proper training and quality assurance/quality control are used, the information that everyday citizens gather can and does get used to make management decisions. As resource agencies' budgets are cinched tighter and tighter, citizen participation in natural resource monitoring becomes more important.

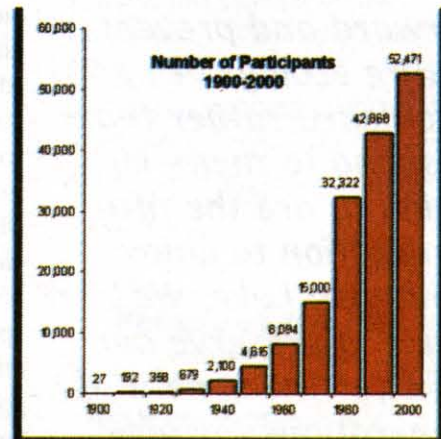
Citizen data has been used in cases, like the Christmas Bird Count, for more than 100 years. Wisconsin's Self-Help Lake Monitoring program has been in place for almost 20 years and includes more than 1,200 people. There are many other programs in place that monitor amphibians, birds, exotics, fish, forests, ground water,

invertebrates, mammals, rivers, streams, vegetation, watersheds, and wetlands.

In Wisconsin this type of citizen-based monitoring activity is gaining momentum. In August 2004, the first annual Citizen-based monitoring conference focused on how the Department of Natural Resources can better serve and support the organizations that do monitoring. As a result of this conference a new citizen-based monitoring coordinator position was established, \$100,000 in partnership program funding was awarded, a Citizen-based monitoring network was established, there is legislation pending that will form an advisory council, and a new website (<http://atriweb.info/cbm/>) that lists programs, news, events and funding sources was developed.

This fall, the second annual

conference will concentrate on how citizen groups can focus their work to coincide with the priorities that the DNR has set. Over the next few months, the DNR and its advisory teams will determine those programs where citizen-based monitoring will be most helpful and needed.



Increase in citizen monitors across the nation since 1900. Source: National Audubon Society