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For Immediate Release:

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Equipment Donation Empowers Citizens to Monitor Water Quality

In April, volunteers working in the Bellamy, Cocheco, Lamprey, and Oyster Rivers will be using brand new water quality monitoring equipment to assess water that flows into the Great Bay Estuary. The New Hampshire Estuaries Project (NHEP) is providing these four volunteer groups with complete water quality test kits that include advanced instruments such as meters that measure dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and temperature. The monitoring work is coordinated through the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services' Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP), which strives to improve water quality monitoring coverage for the protection of water resources.

The NHEP is assisting these groups to enhance their high-quality work in the coastal watershed. The equipment should not only increase the volume of data collected by these groups, but also greatly enhance environmental information that will help the resource planning efforts of local and state governments.

“Getting equipment in the hands of trained, committed volunteers not only results in important data on Great Bay tributaries, but it also promotes citizen-driven, science-based stewardship of water resources,” notes NHEP Director Jennifer Hunter. “This helps us achieve the NHEP mission to protect, enhance, and monitor the environmental quality of the state’s estuaries.”

Ted Wash, VRAP Program Manager, explains how this equipment donation helps the entire VRAP network. “Previously, groups needed to share NHDES equipment and plan their field work around its availability. We did a good job of sharing equipment, but the reality was that these groups were being limited. The NHEP donation not only provides tools to those four watershed associations, but it also frees up more communal equipment for the other monitoring groups.”

Hunter notes that the decision to support VRAP groups was largely based on their track record and ability to collect data that otherwise wouldn’t be collected. “VRAP is well organized, committed to collecting reliable water quality data that the state uses to make resource management decisions, and expands the data collection network across a number of coastal watershed stream reaches. As more and more land is developed throughout the watershed, understanding what’s happening with the water quality in the rivers that drain into our estuaries is increasingly important.”

Lori Chase, Monitoring Coordinator for the Cocheco River Watershed Coalition, appreciates the donation and views it as a great boost to the organization. “This new equipment enables our monitoring teams to do more complex monitoring that will lead to answers to some questions we have had, like ‘What is the relationship between low dissolved oxygen levels and nutrients in the Cocheco River?’” Chase says the equipment has benefits beyond the data, “Having and maintaining our own equipment gives us a greater understanding of the monitoring process and is a great acknowledgement that our work is appreciated and needed.”

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