

EPA Coastal Communications

NATIONAL COASTAL ASSESSMENT: TRAINING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

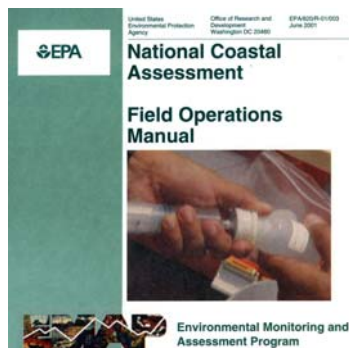
Background

The U.S. EPA's National Coastal Assessment (NCA) is a five year effort led by EPA's Office of Research and Development to evaluate the assessment methods it has developed to advance the science of ecosystem condition monitoring. This program surveys the condition of the nation's coastal resources by creating an integrated and comprehensive monitoring program among the coastal states. Using a probabilistic sampling design and a common set of survey indicators, each state conducts surveys and assesses the condition of their coastal resources. These independent estimates can then be aggregated to assess conditions at regional, biogeographical, and national scales.



Approach

Given the diverse partnerships formed for this program, one of the biggest challenges is in collecting and producing high quality and comparable data. To address this challenge, the NCA program has incorporated several Quality Assurance procedures; including training of field crews, visits to crews during sampling events; visits to analytical laboratories; and technical assistance to field or laboratory personnel. Several documents were also prepared for the NCA program; including the Field Operations Manual (see Cover); Quality Assurance Project Plan; and the Coastal 2000 Northeast Fish Pathology Field Guide and Northeast Information Management Manual. Initial training of state field crews was conducted at each state in the first year (2000) of the program. The week-long training program, usually conducted in the state by EPA NCA Coordinators, provided an overview of the program and its goals and a description of the indicators and sampling procedures; and was followed by several days of comprehensive, hands-on field sampling exercises. The training was customized for each state crew to accommodate differences in gear, vessel size and crew backgrounds, as well as state-specific human safety concerns such as hypothermia and use of emergency immersion suits. Each field crew was required to demonstrate proficiency in all sampling tasks before the NCA Coordinator certified the field crew to conduct sampling. Similarly, all laboratories had to demonstrate proficiency before they were certified to conduct analyses on the samples collected under the NCA program.



Further Information

For further information on the NCA Program, or if you wish to obtain any of the NCA documents described above, please contact the individuals listed below:

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To learn more about the NCA Program, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/emap/nca/index.html>.

Visit the Coastal Communications Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/ged/crc.htm>.