

National Lakes Assessment A Collaborative Survey of the Nation's Lakes

Chapter 9: Next Steps for the National Surveys

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CHAPTER 9.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE NATIONAL SURVEYS



Bayley Lake in Stevens County was one of the lakes the Department of Ecology sampled during the survey.
Photo courtesy of Washington State Department of Ecology.

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Photo courtesy of Lauren Wilkinson, Great Lakes Environmental Center.

Chapter 9 Next Steps for the National Surveys

EPA is committed to continually enhance the National Aquatic Resource surveys in order to improve the quality and quantity of information it needs to understand the condition of the aquatic environment and how it is changing over time. As technologies advance, future surveys and collaborations can also lead to new indicators, new monitoring approaches, and new water resource management programs and policies.

With the publication of this report, the lakes survey moves into a design/planning phase in preparation for the next survey in

2012. This phase will incorporate lessons learned from the first lakes survey, other national surveys, and state, tribal and local experiences. Additionally, EPA anticipates that states and other partners will continue to utilize data from the first lakes survey and issue supplemental reports based on their findings.

During 2010, EPA and its state and tribal partners will take stock of the survey and begin planning for 2012. Issues for discussion may include changes to the design, field methods, equipment, laboratory methods, and/or analyses procedures. Other items include improving reference site selection, refining regionally representative reference sites, and adding more reference sites to the survey. Consideration will be given not only

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Lakes	Design	Field	Lab and Data Analysis	Report	Design and Planning		Field

to how alternate approaches will improve future data, but how the Agency can ensure comparability to the initial baseline.

Supplemental Reports

The NLA included data collection for several indicators for which analysis could not be completed in time for this report. These included benthic macroinvertebrates, sediment mercury, and *enterococcus*. Analysts are currently developing macroinvertebrate indicators to add to our understanding of biological integrity of lakes. Sediment mercury samples are still in the data analysis phase, as is the *enterococcus* dataset. EPA plans to produce supplements to this report with the macroinvertebrate, sediment mercury, and *enterococcus* findings. Supplemental information will be posted on <http://www.epa.gov/lakessurvey>.

In the next few years, EPA plans to continue additional analyses of the survey data to develop tools and strategies that will provide a better understanding of lakes and water resources in general. One important undertaking will be to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationship between lake condition, stressors, and management actions such as point and nonpoint controls and other restoration activities. EPA plans to publish its progress and findings in interim lake survey reports.

Tools and Other Analytical Support

The next two years will also provide an opportunity for states to tailor their own statewide program to complement the national programs. Extensive discussion during the upcoming research and design phase will focus on ways to leverage and integrate national and state-scale surveys. This approach will improve the efficiency

and value investment in monitoring. One EPA near-term project will be to work with the states to develop tools that can be used to re-create the survey for state-wide assessments and for customized purposes. EPA is committed to providing technical support to assist states, tribes and other partners in using these tools. Such an “assessment tool kit” might include IBI or O/E model development, habitat data analysis techniques, decision-support tools, and web-based trainings session.

Future National Assessments

EPA and its state, tribal and federal partners expect to continue to produce national assessments on a yearly cycle. Rivers and stream sampling was completed in 2008 and 2009 and a report will be released in 2011. A national coastal assessment report will be published in 2012 based on field sampling in 2010. Wetlands will be surveyed in 2011, followed by a report in 2013. In 2012, field sampling for lakes will occur again and the assessment report that follows in 2014 will include an evaluation of changes in biological condition and key stressors. Each of the water type surveys will then continue with changes and trends becoming a greater focus for each resource type.

The continued utility of these national surveys and their assessment reports depends on continued consistency in design, as well as in field, lab and assessment methods from assessment to assessment. However, the surveys should also provide the flexibility that allows the science of monitoring to improve over time. Maintaining consistency while allowing flexibility and growth will continue to be one of the challenges of the coming years.

This national lakes survey would not have been possible without the involvement of hundreds of scientists working for state, tribal, and federal agencies and universities across the nation. Future National Aquatic Resource Surveys will continue to rely on this close collaboration, open exchange of information, and the dedication, energy, and hard work of its participants. EPA will continue to work to help its partners translate the expertise they gained through these national surveys to studies of their own waters. It also will work to ensure that this valuable and substantial baseline of information be widely used to evaluate the success of efforts to protect and restore the quality of the Nation's waters.

