



# Water Quality Communication and Outreach Services

*RTI International has been involved with technical support of EPA's national water quality reports since the early 1980s, providing support for a new generation of statistically based national reports for estuarine and coastal waters. RTI has also provided support for major national conferences and forums dealing with state and federal fish consumption advisory programs. In addition, RTI provides mission-critical outreach support for EPA databases and GIS systems.*

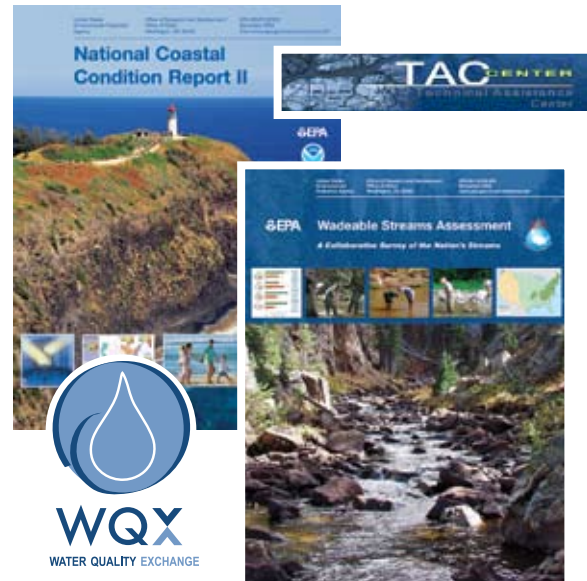
## National Reports

### **Support for the National Coastal Condition Report (NCCR)**

RTI provides extensive support to EPA for the development of the NCCR series (NCCR I, NCCR II, and NCCR III), which presents available coastal condition data for the nation. RTI's support on this project includes acquiring coastal condition data from many agencies, analyzing and presenting the data on national and regional scales, and composing highlight articles that illustrate regional coastal programs or issues. Specific tasks have included compiling data from EPA's 305(b) and 303(d) programs, the National Listing of Fish and Wildlife Advisories, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Shellfish Register, and EPA's BEACH Watch Program; receiving text and data from EPA's National Coastal Assessment program for use in developing coastal indicator graphics for each region; preparing GIS maps showing the locations of coastal monitoring; and final design and production of the report.

### **Support for the Wadeable Streams Assessment (WSA) Report**

The WSA report provides information on a statistically valid survey of the biological condition of small streams throughout the United States. EPA worked with the states to conduct the WSA, which used standardized methods of analysis at 1,392 randomly selected sites to gather data representing the condition of all streams in regions sharing similar ecological characteristics. Wadeable streams were chosen for assessment because they are a critical natural resource for the nation and there are well-established



standardized methods for monitoring these waterbodies. The WSA establishes a national baseline for comparison with results from future studies. This information will help EPA and the states evaluate the success of national efforts to protect and restore water quality. RTI's experience providing technical, editorial, and graphics support for other EPA water quality assessment reports made RTI uniquely qualified to assist EPA in the development of the WSA report.

### **Guidance, Handbooks, and Technical Reports**

RTI provided support in the development of chapter and highlight materials for Chapter 5 ("Gather Existing Data and Develop an Inventory") of EPA's Draft Handbook for Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters (EPA 841-B-05-005, October 2005). The document

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## Water Quality Communication and Outreach Services *(continued)*

is structured so that it can be followed step-by-step through the watershed planning process or readers can go to individual sections that highlight specific technical tools for use in the watershed planning effort. Worksheets and checklists are provided throughout the handbook to help work through the watershed planning process. Each chapter includes information that addresses the key issues for each step, along with examples to illustrate how readers can apply these concepts to their own situation. The approach in this handbook provides the framework for the system introduced in the Watershed Plan Builder Tool and Planning website (<http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershedplanning/>).

### National Conferences and Technical Assistance

#### *Support for the National Forum on Contaminants in Fish*

RTI is providing technical assistance to EPA in the planning, conducting, and reporting of the 2007 National Forum on Contaminants in Fish (Forum), which brings together health professionals concerned with assessing and managing the risks and benefits of fish consumption. To ensure the success of this meeting, RTI's fish consumption advisory experts are working with state colleagues on the Steering Committee to create a technical agenda for the Forum that will cover state-of-the-science topics of interest. RTI will also support EPA by arranging meeting space and audiovisual equipment, providing advanced information to attendees, assisting with registration, preparing visual aids, identifying and procuring speakers and technical experts, evaluating results, and preparing high-quality, visually pleasing proceedings. RTI provided similar support for the successful 2005 Fish Forum in Baltimore, MD.

#### *Support for the National STORET User's Conferences*

RTI provided support for the 2004 National STORET User's Conference, which promoted the increased use of EPA's STORET system, a modernized data management

system that stores and catalogs water quality information gathered by states, academics, and private citizens. STORET is a repository for water quality, biological, and physical data and is used by state environmental agencies, EPA and other federal agencies, universities, private citizens, and many others. RTI is also providing support for the November 2007 STORET conference. This conference will involve themes related to development of the new Water Quality Exchange (WQX) approach, which will move STORET into a distributed network, thereby becoming the new standard for all major EPA data systems.

#### *RTI Technical Assistance Center*

As a Section 501(c), nonprofit organization, RTI is allowed to participate in a wide range of grants and cooperative agreements that significantly contribute to EPA's initiative to increase states' capacity to assume stewardship for important monitoring and assessment tools that establish and maintain the vital data flows for EPA's Integrated Reporting framework. RTI was awarded an EPA Clean Water Act Section 104(b) grant to create a Technical Assistance Center (TAC) to help EPA and state governments achieve clean and safe water throughout the nation by providing direct technical support to states and EPA regional staff. This support includes training, outreach, and other technical assistance for EPA data systems, such as the Assessment Database (ADB), as well as support for state GIS efforts, particularly states' use of the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) and NHD tools (e.g., NHD-RIT, WebRIT).

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RTI-3144 06/2007



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