

The Basics of Starting Your Quality Assurance Plan Project (QAPP) for Water Quality

Okay, so we know that there are many steps to go through in order to develop a QAPP, and sometimes it is difficult to know just where to begin- but not to worry! Some of the information needed for a QAPP is based on what you already know. Here are some helpful tips to get you started:

- Start by identifying your problem:
 - Is pollution a concern in your community?
 - Are you concerned about specific impacts in your environment and need some way to help answer community questions?
 - Do you need baseline information to determine the current natural conditions of your water resources and their surrounding areas?
 - Are you recognizing that the impacts are growing and you want to track changes over time?
 - Do you want to establish background information for future data users, or for the use of future generations?
- Document any available background information. This is a great way to incorporate traditional wisdom and local knowledge.
 - Speak with the Elders about what types of changes they have seen throughout the years. (Habitat, fish and wildlife changes.)
 - Talk to your community members about stories that have been shared.
 - Document their comments through surveys and interviews.
 - Are there pictures of your area to help you describe the types of changes you've seen or heard about?
 - Is there any other background information, scientific or otherwise that you could use?
- Write up a summary of the type of work you would like to perform (who, what, when and where?).
 - Who will participate on your team of water quality monitors?
 - What type(s) of monitoring will you use (physical, biological, and/or chemical?).
 - * If chemical, what would you like to test for? (Go back to your problem identification: Is there point source pollution to deal with, i.e.- oil spill, dumpsite, mining development?) *These are more technical questions and you will need to look at the list of Data Quality Objectives (DQO's) to help you decide what testing equipment to use. DQO's as well as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) have been developed by NAFWS and Cook Inlet Keeper to help guide you through the technical side of QAPP. While SOP's are still in the submittal process for approval, DQO's are now available for your use!*
 - When will you conduct your monitoring events?
 - * Annually - Used for habitat inventory
 - * Monthly (a regularly scheduled event over a long period of time, generally many years)- In the form of chemical analyses used for developing baseline information, which can also be used by governmental agencies.

- * Seasonally (once in the spring, once in the fall)- used for biological monitoring
a.k.a.- rapid bioassessment!
- Where will you conduct your monitoring? Be sure to choose sites that are representative of the area to be monitored. We want to compare apples to apples, not apples to oranges!

So there you have it. Keep in mind there are still more elements to be covered in writing your QAPP, but don't get discouraged! While this is a brief overview of how to start your QAPP, the questions here will help pull together the basic elements to get you headed in the right direction. Here are some encouraging tips:

- o Be patient. Development of a QAPP takes time and a little research.
- o Educate yourself. Learn the terminology and definitions to help you better understand the process. (There's actually a glossary for this stuff!) Who knows, maybe you'll be just the person to help others learn about QAPP.
- o Keep your community involved as much as possible.
- o Don't be afraid to ask other Tribes, agencies, or organizations for ideas and advice!

There are other sources of information to help you understand the QAPP process. Please visit these websites for more details :

www.epa.gov/r10earth/offices/oea/epaqar5.pfd

www.epa.gov/r10earth/offices/oea/epaqag5.pfd

QAPP workshops will be available in the near future. Please take a look at our Water Quality Monitoring brochure to sign up for upcoming workshops!