

**National STORET Conference
Reports From Region/State Breakout Sessions
November 8, 2001**

Notes by: Jim Porter, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Mary Skopec, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Dwane Young and Kimberly Sparks, Research Triangle Institute

Region 10: Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho

Reporter: Russell Kunibe, AK

- AK and US Bureau of Reclamation are probably the only ones who plan to use STORET now. WA and OR have their own systems.
- Many Region 10 states are looking at CDX and want EPA to spend time developing it.
- EPA should put more resources into improving STORET given the level of commitment to it. States have to adapt their business models to use it. For example, v3.0 will require huge changes but states can't plan for it when the timeline is uncertain. Need v3.0 sooner.
- Applauded anyone who has successfully put data into STORET.

Region 9: Nevada, California, Arizona, Hawaii

Reporter: Holly Lambert, Nevada

- ! Nevada and Hawaii were the only Region 9 states that attended the breakout session. Other attendees from Clark County Sanitary District, Southern California Coastal Project, Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory, and EPA.
- ! Bob King and Lee Manning should be doing database development and have others do STORET training sessions.
- ! EPA is pushing states within Region 9 to use STORET. However, the group was in general agreement that STORET does not meet their needs for toxicity, Rapid Bioassessment (Lee points out that this is already in STORET).
- ! There was agreement that they need to do a Regional STORET conference to begin the process with Region 9 states. They would like to participate in CDX testing of products.

Region 8: Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota

Reporter: Tavis Eddy, Wyoming

- Marty McComb, Region 8 STORET coordinator, is their first line of support, information, training. Great EPA Regional support.
- All Region 8 states and Southern Ute tribe are actively using STORET.
- Most are using SIM. Joe Gross in ND was a SIM beta tester.

- Feel good about available tools.

Region 7: Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri

Reporter: Carl Gates, Missouri

- ! Karen Rush will be new EPA Regional STORET coordinator.
- ! Would like to thank EPA for SIM development.
- ! Need more technical support from HQ and the Region.
- ! Bulletin board option with WISER is a good idea.
- ! Need a mandate from Headquarters to get Regional Administrator to buy into STORET.. Region 7 is unique in that many of the states do not have existing water quality databases to house their data. This puts us in a position where STORET could become the primary database for Region 7 states, but this is dependent upon resolving existing difficulties with data entry and retrieval.

Region 6: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Reporter: Alan Price, Arkansas

- Obstacles
 - Metadata setup demands time.
 - Cost of Oracle and equipment.
 - Getting own people to talk to each other.
- Needs
 - Force issue to upper management.
 - Provide more guidance.
 - Show us this is important – dedicate more staff to STORET.
 - Quicker tool and update development.
 - Easier exports and data access
- Suggestions
 - Issue THE STORET memo from Office of Water.
 - Tie funding to data input.
 - Tell upper management that STORET is important.
 - Develop front end correctly.
 - Provide more training/technical support.
 - Improve documentation.
 - Not as many people dedicated to STORET as other national databases like AIRS.
 - More training for regional coordinators.
 - Add staff at HQ or have other trainers so Bob and Lee can work on development.
 - Don't talk about updates unless they will be released soon..
- States can...
 - Use resources of the National STORET Alliance.

- Focus resources on STORET.
- Commit to it.
- Cooperate with other states on data entry techniques.
- Get IT support.
- ☐ You should...
 - Spend the time to manually enter all necessary metadata.
 - Develop links to your other databases.
 - Extract your data.
 - Use a batch file generator or one that someone else has developed.

Region 5: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Reporter: Jeff Mitzelfelt, Illinois

Obstacles to Effective Use at the State Level

- Batch storage.
- Users want to see their data, but they can not get it out.
- Station list screens take way too long to appear.
- Frustrated by having to store sample bottles with different preservatives separately. Gold Systems has not been able to make this a priority, but plans to do it eventually.

Elevating the Role of the Regional Coordinator

- Regional coordinators need to work with the data, store data of their own to get experience.
- Coordinator needs to be able to give it his full attention, needs training.

Successes and Approaches that are Working Well

- STORET needs to retain its culture of helpfulness and tech support.

Ways To Improve STORET Training and Technical Assistance

- Include intro to SQL in STORET training. Canned queries would be helpful.
- A periodic regional conference call or might be helpful. Make better use of bulletin board to be able to follow discussion threads.

Region 4: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

Reporter: Dave Chestnut, South Carolina

All states but Tennessee were present.

- ☐ Status: Several states are trying to use STORET and some have been successful, but several state have in-house systems. These states with in-house systems have so many resources tied into their individual systems that they will not use STORET as the primary database. There was agreement that we need to develop multi-state, cross-jurisdictional TMDL's, which requires sharing of data; therefore

data needs to be in a consistent form. Region 4 also agreed that Lee Manning and Bob King should stay home rather than spend their time training.

- ❑ Needs: Regional Support:
There was also agreement that there is a strong need for Regional support for STORET. The Region 4 coordinator has been told to spend 5% of his time on STORET (this is a mere 12.5 days). Regions need a full-time STORET coordinator, not someone who is split among many different projects. States also need a regional person who is a programmer/developer to deal with some of the technical issues. However, states don't just want more dollars sent to the regions, but would like to see FTE's created specifically for the purpose of assisting STORET. A clear message should be sent that the Regional STORET coordinator should only be used for STORET, not TMDLs or other high profile programs.
- ❑ Needs: State coordination:
Designated state STORET coordinators who are responsible for tracking what is happening with their states. The state coordinator should be someone who isn't over-committed, and hopefully someone with some technical training. EPA needs to send dollars for personnel slot.
- ❑ Needs: Tech support:
Need help converting and uploading from other data formats. We need something that tells the users the minimum data elements.
- ❑ Needs: Info Exchange:
We need a method to gather and distribute tools seen here this week to get data in and data out. EPA does not need to waste their time reinventing the wheel – take advantage innovative solutions that already exist.
- ❑ Recommendations: EPA should walk the walk and talk the talk: EPA data is also not going in to STORET (EMAP, REMAP, special studies).
- ❑ Planned and potential regional activities: STORET training set up for January. Looking at setting up a regional-scale WISER to assist the other states. There is an existing agreement between Florida and Regional office for personnel exchange and we need to set that up for other states in the Region.

Region 3: Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Delaware

Reporter: George Harmon, Maryland

- ! Problem with acceptance of STORET. Outreach should emphasize the value of the metadata.
- ! Concerned about the perceived amount of metadata. Consider having a short list of the required elements rather than embedding it in the screen hierarchy.

- ! Need more support. Each state should issue a letter to Regional EPA administrators emphasizing the value and need for STORET, for technical support
- ! Continue to develop SIM and get it up and running
- ! Training has been fairly good. Recommend mock data for hands-on data entry, professional trainers to go through the set-up process.
- ! Customer service should be improved. NSA could help.
- ! Schematic of screens would be helpful.
- ! Some concern for which updates pertain to which versions – need to document updates to each version of STORET.
- ! Some subscribers were dropped from list server. Needs to be a two-way verification of membership.
- ! Searchable detailed FAQ on web page would be helpful.
- ! Appreciated this national conference. Regional conferences would be helpful but might discourage uniformity. HQ could be involved in each to ensure uniformity.

Region 2 New York, New Jersey, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico

Reporter: Phil Morton, New Jersey

Status

- There has been a mixture of implementation in Region 2. US Virgin Islands and DRBC are using personal ORACLE versions of STORET. DRBC is migrating from a 386 platform to an NT and has entered two years of data in. NY's system failed and they lost everything; they are developing schema and plans for loading data. NJ has client/server implementation. 1 ½ years worth of data, and is looking to expand into watershed stakeholders and contractors. Also trying to link STORET to Arc IMS and using map objects. Obtaining ITIS data has helped.
- Only 25% of Stan Stephansen's time goes toward STORET. Region 2 has entered its BEACH data.
- They really appreciate STORET updating with the ITIS database.

Concerns

- Problems with cryptic batch load error messages. Also need the ability to batch in non-detects. Physical parameters not able to take non detect.
- There is an existing problem with people not recognizing the value of STORET (state, federal, local level) and allocating appropriate resources.
- How to deal with duplication of data warehousing (multiple USGS data reservoirs)
- Retrieval of data by alternate IDs (external reference schemes) – retrieval is based on one station ID, although in practice different groups refer to the stations using different IDs.
- Response time to calls and emails have been an issue.

Needs/Recommendations

- EPA should make and stick with real delivery dates and times because we States accountable up the line.
- Better tech support and training. Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Monthly emails between Region 2 people. Quarterly conference calls to share information.
- PPA says that 9 months after end of fiscal year data must be in STORET.
- States with common waters should work together.
- Something needs to happen with toxicity data.
- Would be nice to do extra table linkages.

Region 1 – Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Reporter: Deb Soule, NH

- ! Region 1 STORET coordinator has many other responsibilities.
- ! No STORET successes in region yet. Nothing in modernized STORET yet.
- ! Problems with lack of resources, insufficient technical assistance.
- ! Some problems with State IT departments refusing to load data.
- ! STORET doesn't meet immediate program needs. States are working with other databases and trying to figure out how to get STORET data out of them. STORET is not a priority in the States -- their own program needs come first.
- ! Need support for getting data in and out of STORET.
- ! Regional meeting was good. Plan to form regional group to track progress.

Follow-up questions

- ✓ Need a score-card to assess how the states are doing. EPA willing to do this with something that isn't a grade, but gives the user an idea of implementation status.
- ✓ Talk to national and regional governor's associations and ask them to support a national line item for STORET. Margarete suggested the state CIO's.
- ✓ Can we get the state coordinator names and phone numbers from EPA? EPA response: willing to put the names and numbers on the web (if states are agreeable).
- ✓ Margarete suggested getting involved in the National Monitoring Council conference.
- ✓ Lack of visibility was a consistent theme. One tool may be to expand the EPA/STORET presence at the ESRI conference in July. Margarete agreed with this idea and also suggested the National Monitoring Council meeting early next year would be a good forum.