

Determining the overall use and influence of a long-term marine environmental monitoring program: A Case Study on Gulfwatch in Nova Scotia

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Chemical contamination of marine environments can pose numerous risks to both ecosystem and human health. Monitoring trends of chemical contaminants over time and space can provide managers and decision-makers the information necessary to make decisions to improve ecosystem health or to protect human health. However, information obtained through monitoring programs can only inform management and decision making if managers and decision-makers are aware of, and are using, the information. This study looked at a long-term biomonitoring program: Gulfwatch Contaminants Monitoring Program, a sub-committee of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment. Gulfwatch uses blue mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) to monitor chemical contamination in the Gulf of Maine. The overall awareness and use of Gulfwatch information was examined through a cataloguing of all Gulfwatch-related publications, analysis of the Gulfwatch webpage, and interviews of potential users of Gulfwatch information in Nova Scotia and Gulfwatch committee members. It was found that there was some awareness and very little use of Gulfwatch information in Nova Scotia. Reasons for the limited awareness and use were mostly linked to the lack of interest in chemical contamination in both the federal and provincial governments. Recommendations for implementing the methodology for other monitoring programs as well as for improving the use of long-term monitoring information are given..