
COVERING LETTER & INVITATION

Dear SASS Practitioner

This letter serves to invite you to participate in the next SASS Proficiency Testing Scheme (PTS).

As most of you will no doubt be aware the River Health Programme (RHP) recently entered what was termed the “anchoring phase” of the programme. This was after the RHP National Co-ordinating Committee met in 1999 and identified a number of key processes that were necessary to assist in the operational implementation of the RHP.

One of the key processes identified was the implementation of procedures for quality control and assurance. With SASS arguably the most “advanced” of all of the tools available to the RHP, this has been chosen to spearhead this process. As part of this, the first PTS for this method was recently run with some success with 4 SASS practitioners in KZN. The plan is to now expand this to cover the rest of the country. This letter serves as an invitation to participate in the next SASS PTS scheduled for early December 2000.

The basic programme for such a PTS is as follows:

- a single SASS sample is collected, preserved and stained
- this sample is then sent around the country to individual SASS practitioners (analysts) sequentially (pass-the-parcel manner)
- every analyst spends a maximum of half an hour analysing the sample before passing this on to the next analyst in the sequence
- results are emailed (preferably, on a standard template), or posted, to Mark Graham at Umgeni Water
- all results are then compiled, analysed and a summary report sent to all analysts.

This information will all feed into the QC system for the RHP.

As part of a longer-term goal of “certification” of SASS practitioners, all practitioners wishing to contribute to the RHP will be required to successfully participate in these SASS PTSs.

All SASS practitioners in SA will have the opportunity to join this scheme. A provisional list of involvement is as follows:

Brian Fowles (Envirocare)
Cebo Mhlongo, Mark Graham (Umgeni Water)
Jan Baxter (Private SASS trainer)
Angus Burns (Umlaas Irrigation Board)
Maxi Holder and Jake Alletson (Alletson Ecologicals)
Christa Thirion, Mary-Jean Gabriel (DWA - IWQS)
Colleen Todd, Petro Vos, Peter MacMillan (Environmentek - CSIR Pretoria)
Piet Muller, Hermien Roux (Gauteng - Dept. Agriculture, Conservation & Environment)
Justine Fowler, Helen Dallas (Southern Water, UCT)
Candice Haskins (Cape Metro Council)
Stuart Mangold (North West Province – Dept. Agriculture, Conservation & Environment)
Gerhard Diederichs, Felicity Weir
Mark Chutter, Rob Palmer (AFRIDEV – consultants)

I would be pleased to hear of any other folk practising this method and will gladly add them to the list of participants.

Details needed from all participants would be the following:

- willingness to participate and to analyse a sample within a week of receipt
- full contact (postal) details, including email address if available
- willingness to forward the PTS sample on to the next person in the list (at own cost)

Please would all those SASS practitioners willing to participate contact Mark Graham, at Hydrobiology, Umgeni Water (via email on mark.graham@umgeni.co.za (preferably) or on 033 – 3411140) before 15th November 2000.

Only those people interested in this scheme will be included in the next PTS scheduled for early December 2000. At this stage there will be no cost to participants other than the postage costs to get the sample on to the next person in the sequential list of analysts.

The procedure and criteria for assessment are as detailed in the accompanying appendix.

We look forward to your participation

Dr Chris Dickens
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Umgeni Water