

## **FLORIDA LAKEWATCH: 37 YEARS OF VOLUNTEERISM DRIVING RESEARCH OF FLORIDA'S AQUATIC RESOURCES**

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Florida LAKEWATCH is one of the country's largest volunteer science programs. Since its inception in 1986, LAKEWATCH has monitored the monthly water quality of over 6000 sites across more than 2000 lakes, rivers, and coastlines around the state of Florida. All water samples were collected by our 1800 robustly trained and dedicated volunteers, some of whom have been a part of our program for 37 years. The resulting >437,000 data points have been shared with collaborating scientists from over 25 countries and used in over 60 peer-reviewed papers and 40 student theses. This talk will highlight the LAKEWATCH program's impact on our collective understanding of sub-tropical limnology through discussion of major research milestones. For example, we will highlight our past work on how: (1) geological and weather patterns influence lacustrine chemistry, (2) the abiotic environment alters bird and fish community structures, and (3) invasive plant management alters nutrient storage and cycling. Additionally, we will discuss the future research interests and objectives of the LAKEWATCH program as we transition to new leadership. This includes our plans for expanded laboratory capacity and enhanced data management and sharing protocols. Furthermore, we will present a new mission statement and discuss our future vision for the program. Moving forward, the Florida LAKEWATCH program will maintain its core focus on reporting of long-term trends of nutrient levels within the state's inland and coastal waters. Our data will continue to be shared with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Watershed Information Network, as well as with other water researchers, within the University of Florida community and beyond.

PRESENTER BIO: Marina Schwartz is the Database Manager at Florida LAKEWATCH. She works closely with LAKEWATCH staff in multiple aspects of limnological research and data management. Marina loves to travel and is always in pursuit of the perfect cup of coffee.