THE WORLD WATER QUALITY ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

June 2025

The World Water Quality Alliance is convened by the United Nations Environment Programme. It proudly presents its monthly newsletter, YEMAYA, named after the ancient African goddess of the ocean and motherhood. She is associated with fertility, femininity, protection, healing, and childbirth. Her domains are symbolized as water creatures: the seas, rivers, and lakes. She is honoured and revered in the African diaspora, particularly in Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, and the United States.

We, the World Water Quality Alliance Coordination Team, welcome articles about water quality. Tell us about your experiences. Describe the challenges you and your people face. Talk to our global community; talk to people from around the World. Send your articles to wwqa-coordination@un.org.

World Environment Day • World Food Safety Day • World Oceans Day

From source to sea, water quality is a thread that binds ecosystems, food systems, and the health of our planet. On World Environment Day, we're reminded that protecting nature begins with protecting the waters that nourish it. On World Food Safety Day, we recognize that safe

food starts with clean water — in the soil, on the farm, and throughout the supply chain. And on World Oceans Day, we reflect on how upstream pollution flows into our oceans, threatening marine life and coastal communities.

This month of global observance calls on us to act — to safeguard water quality for a healthier environment, safer food, and thriving oceans. Water quality underpins environmental health, food safety, and ocean resilience — from source to sea.

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Water Quality in Focus: WWQA's Milestones and Momentum

Strengthening the Science–Policy Interface for Water Quality

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new WWQA Workstream: **Science Policy Interface for Water (SPI4W)**, led by **Dr. Sabrina Kirschke** from the Science-Policy Lab at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.This workstream brings together experts from science, policy, and civil society to address a critical but often overlooked challenge: the **disconnect between scientific knowledge and policy action**. While poor water quality is frequently attributed to a lack of data or political will, SPI4Water highlights a third, equally important barrier—**weak science–policy**

linkages.SPI4Water will work across WWQA's diverse community, including those focused on plastics, wastewater, citizen science, youth engagement, and regional cases in Africa. Together, the workstream aims to identify and test effective models of science–policy interaction, support a global data-to-action approach, and co-develop frameworks and pilot studies that strengthen how knowledge informs decision-making. Key focus areas include:

Designing **innovative formats** for science–policy engagement.

Evaluating the **performance of current models**

Defining and promoting **policy-relevant knowledge** for nature and water quality.

The workstream will run its first phase through December 2026, with planned outputs including a global network, case studies, joint research proposals, and targeted policy briefs.

The **kick-off meeting** will take place on **1 August 2025**. If you are interested in joining the workstream, please get in touch with

Dr. Sabrina Kirschke at sabrina.kirschke@mfn.berlin formore information.

Braiding Knowledge Systems: Honoring Diverse Voices for Lake Resilience

Lakes are more than bodies of water — they are living systems that sustain biodiversity, culture, livelihoods, and identity. In recognition of this, the international community will mark the **first-ever World Lakes Day** on **27 August 2025**. This new observance highlights the critical need to protect and restore lakes around the world, drawing attention to the multiple stressors—pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable development—that threaten these vital ecosystems.

To mark the occasion, and in celebration of the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**, the World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA), in partnership with GEO AquaWatch and members of the MAGIK Network (Melding AquaWatch Global Indigenous Knowledge), will host a special webinar:

Braiding Knowledge Systems: Honoring Diverse Voices for Lake Resilience

🗓️ **29 July 2025**

🕚 **11:00 UTC**

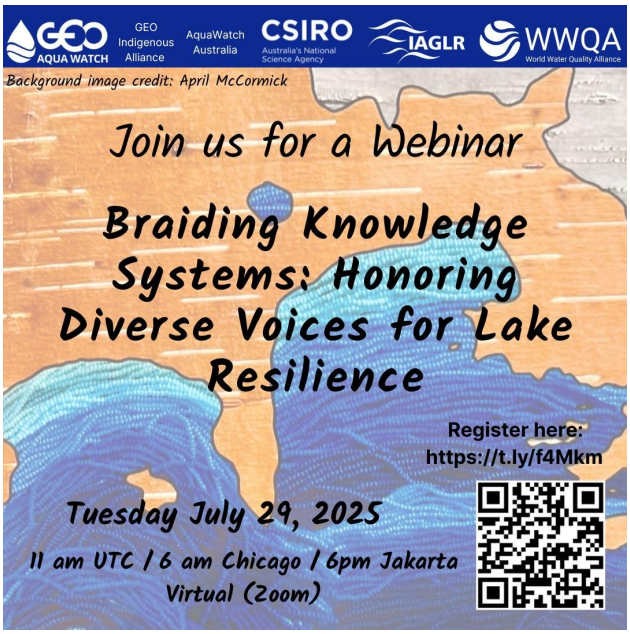
🔗 **Register here**: https://un-org-unep.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pijTx9ZiT8-ZmS4EkUkoLQ

This event will bring together Indigenous knowledge holders and scientific experts to share insights on the importance of weaving together traditional knowledge and scientific approaches

to better protect lake ecosystems. It will explore how community-led observations, cultural values, and place-based stewardship can complement Earth observation tools, leading to more resilient and inclusive lake management.

The webinar also builds on recent collaborations, including the session WWQA co-hosted at the **68th Annual Conference on Great Lakes Research**, which highlighted both the opportunities and challenges in integrating diverse ecological knowledge systems into mainstream water governance.

By amplifying diverse voices and grounding action in shared respect, **World Lakes Day** is not just a celebration — it is a call to honor lakes as living heritage and act collectively to secure their future.



Workshop at the CS4Water 2025 Conference

At the recent **Citizen Science for Water (CS4Water) Conference** in Delft, the WWQA Citizen Science Workstream hosted an engaging workshop on the role of citizen science in supporting **SDG Indicator 6.3.2**, which tracks good ambient water quality. The session offered participants an overview of the indicator methodology, recent findings from the **2024 Progress Report**, and the WWQA's efforts to integrate citizen-generated data—particularly through the **2024 Data Integration Project**.

Breakout group discussions focused first on the challenges and opportunities of the indicator's binary classification—"good" vs "not good." Participants raised concerns about oversimplification, data ownership, inconsistent methodologies, and context-specific standards. Yet they also acknowledged the benefits of a simple, comparable system that facilitates

communication, helps identify priority areas, and could increase participation if designed with flexibility and clarity.

The second breakout explored what is needed for citizen science to contribute to **long-term trend analysis**. Key enablers included sustained funding, standardization, political support, trust, youth engagement, and institutional recognition. Participants emphasized that citizen science must be more than ad hoc efforts—it needs embedded support systems, feedback loops, and transparent governance structures.

Although time was limited for the third breakout on communicating uncertainty across multiple data sources, initial discussions highlighted the importance of clear, context-sensitive communication tools and collaborative approaches to interpretation.

The workshop concluded with strong consensus that citizen science holds untapped potential for global water quality monitoring. However, meaningful integration will require investment in tools, standards, and relationships that link **community action with institutional processes**—bridging the gap between local data and global decision-making.

1 - Workshop at the CS4Water 2025 Conference. Photo credit - Stuart Warner

2 - Workshop at the CS4Water 2025 Conference. Photo credit - Stuart Warner

UNEP and Nile Basin Initiative Sign MoU to Strengthen Collaboration on Water Quality

The World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA) is pleased to announce the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)**. The agreement was formalized during a small signing event held recently, marking a significant step forward in strengthening cooperation for the protection and sustainable management of water resources across the Nile Basin.

This partnership builds on ongoing collaboration between WWQA and NBI, particularly in addressing the pressing challenge of **macroplastic pollution** in freshwater systems. Looking ahead, the MoU paves the way for expanded engagement in additional areas, including **capacity development**, **citizen science**, and **support to member countries** in monitoring and safeguarding water quality.

Together, WWQA and NBI aim to enhance basin-wide resilience by fostering **science-based decision-making, inclusive participation, and integrated approaches** to freshwater governance—contributing to shared goals for environmental sustainability and regional cooperation.

3 - An in-person meeting and signing took place with NBI's Executive Director, Dr. Florence Grace Adongo, and UNEP's Division Director, Dr. Jian Liu. Image credit: Anham Salyani.

Tackling Riverine and Estuarine Plastic Pollution for a Cleaner Ocean

On **13 June 2025**, the **WWQA Plastics Workstream** participated in the official UN Ocean Conference side event, *"Tackling Riverine and Estuarine plastic pollution for a cleaner ocean"* co-hosted with the EU-funded INSPIRE project and VITO. The session brought together experts to explore how improved research-policy linkages can reduce plastic pollution from rivers to oceans.

WWQA shared its efforts to strengthen freshwater plastic monitoring and highlighted the urgent need for harmonized, scalable approaches. The session was also a valuable opportunity to learn about other ongoing initiatives and explore potential collaborations with aligned working groups. The message was clear: tackling marine plastic pollution must begin upstream by investing in inland monitoring and coordinated action.

Aligning Food Production and Water Quality: Advancing Sustainable Phosphorus Management

The World Water Quality Alliance (WWQA), through its **Ecosystems Workstream**, is actively engaged in addressing the growing global challenge of phosphorus mismanagement and its implications for freshwater quality, food security, and ecosystem health. As the workstream collaborates with key partners in the **GEF-funded uPcycle Project**, the project contributes to advancing integrated approaches that promote sustainable nutrient use, reduce pollution from agricultural sources, and support the restoration of freshwater ecosystems.

Phosphorus plays a central role in modern food systems. However, excessive or poorly managed phosphorus application — particularly from chemical fertilizers — is a major source of water pollution, contributing to eutrophication, loss of aquatic biodiversity, and public health risks.

The uPcycle Project aims to address these interlinked challenges by promoting circular economy solutions that close nutrient loops, enhance land and water management practices, and build the enabling conditions for long-term environmental and agricultural resilience.

These themes will be at the heart of the upcoming **8th Sustainable Phosphorus Summit (SPS8)**, which will take place from **30 September to 3 October 2025 in Accra, Ghana**. Co-convened by a consortium of leading research and policy institutions, SPS8 will bring together scientists, policy makers, industry stakeholders, and civil society representatives to accelerate global and regional action on phosphorus sustainability.

SPS8 is grounded in four principles: environmental sustainability, social inclusion, scientific and technological innovation, and practical policy uptake. The summit will feature six thematic sessions:

- Phosphorus and food security
- Fertilizer use and agricultural practices
- Biodiversity and human health impacts
- Nutrient-climate interactions
- Long-term phosphorus sustainability
- Governance and policy frameworks

In addition, SPS8 will host three cross-cutting working groups:

- **Phosphorus Action Plan for Africa**
- **Global Phosphorus White Paper**
- **Enabling the Next Generation of Sustainable Phosphorus Champions**

With strong alignment to the goals of the uPcycle Project and the WWQA's Ecosystems Workstream, SPS8 offers a platform to advance shared priorities in nutrient governance, policy coherence, and integrated environmental management.

Registration and Abstract Submission

- **Round 2 Registration opens**: 15 July 2025
- **Abstract submission deadline**: 15 August 2025

Opportunities are available for **poster presentations**, **lightning talks**, and **panel contributions**.

Register here

Submit your abstract

For more information, including the streamlined programme and guiding principles, please visit the SPS8 website or consult the inclusivity framework.

As nutrient pressures on inland waters continue to mount, collaborative action on phosphorus is essential to safeguard ecosystem services and ensure long-term water quality. The WWQA remains committed to supporting multi-stakeholder efforts that bridge science, practice, and policy for sustainable phosphorus and freshwater futures.

Beyond the Bureaucracy: When Citizen Science Fills the Gaps in Environmental Governance

During a recent meeting with WRUA representatives and WRA and KeNaWRUA, we held a meaningful discussion about strengthening collaboration between citizen scientists and local WRUAs to support community-led water quality monitoring across Nairobi's rivers.

A recurring concern emerged: the **fragmentation and limited coordination among institutions responsible for environmental governance**. Kenya is home to many institutions with overlapping mandates—yet too often, **insufficient clarity in roles and limited enforcement capacity** leads to duplicated efforts and diminished impact. It becomes a crowded stage, where many actors speak, but few are heard—and all while environmental degradation continues unchecked.

For example, one agency may conduct critical environmental assessments, only for the findings to be handed over to another body for action. Enforcement then falls to yet another actor, often under-resourced or lacking the capacity to act decisively. This chain of delegation can result in delays, inefficiencies, or inaction. In such a system, **responsibility is diffused—and accountability becomes elusive**.

Meanwhile, the Nairobi River continues to suffer under the weight of untreated waste, raw sewage, and industrial discharge. The Dandora dumpsite—over capacity since 2001—remains the city's main landfill. Most neighbourhoods lack access to sewer lines and depend on septic tanks. During heavy rains, the city's limited drainage system overflows, mixing stormwater with sewage, which ultimately ends up in our rivers.

The question of **"Who is responsible?"** becomes difficult to answer. And when everyone is responsible, too often, no one is truly accountable.

This situation calls for **strengthening—not multiplying—institutions**. Kenya does not need more actors; it needs **better coordination, clear mandates, empowered agencies, and streamlined communication**. Importantly, it needs a governance framework where good data is acted upon, where assessments lead to enforcement, and where public institutions work in synergy—not in silos.

This is where the role of **young citizen scientists** becomes both powerful and sobering. Their work—monitoring, cleaning, advocating—is not merely voluntary service; it is **a form of environmental justice**, a response to gaps that persist in formal systems. These youth are stepping in where institutional reach sometimes falls short.

But we must ask: **How long can we expect citizen scientists to carry this burden without recognition, resourcing, or structural support?** Their efforts will continue to be undermined unless we address the systemic governance challenges they're up against.

Because even the most passionate grassroots action cannot succeed if the broader system remains unresponsive. If ministries aren't communicating, if data remains siloed, and if institutional processes produce reports with no follow-through, then we risk mistaking motion for progress.

It is time for a shift.

A shift from institutional proliferation to institutional performance.

A shift from parallel mandates to collective accountability.

A shift from bureaucracy to impact.

Only then can we truly support the efforts of citizen scientists—and ensure that our rivers, communities, and institutions thrive together.

4 - Group photo after the deliberations. Image credit: Faith Nangila Wafula.

5 - WRUA representatives, WRA, KeNaWRUA and Nairobi River Citizen Scientists in action vouching for their data. Image credit: Enock Kiminta.

6 - WRUA representatives, WRA, KeNaWRUA and Nairobi River Citizen Scientists in action vouching for their data. Image credit: Enock Kiminta.

Article submission by Faith Nangila Wafula - Nairobi River Citizen Scientist and a citizen science trainer.

The WWQA BULLETIN BOARD

Global Seminar Announcement: Solutions for the ONE WORLD: Monitoring Chemical Pollution in Low-Capacity Settings

🗓️ *17–19 September 2025*

📍 *Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), Leipzig, Germany*

📎 Register by 15 June 2025

Water plays a central role in addressing global chemical pollution challenges. This international seminar will bring together scientists and practitioners, with a focus on the Global South, to strengthen collaboration on monitoring, understanding, and reducing chemical pollution in data-scarce regions. The event includes a pilot water sampling study and will contribute to a global network committed to sustainable pollution solutions.

📍 Venue: Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Permoserstr. 15, 04318 Leipzig, Germany

📬 Contact & Registration: global-seminar@ufz.de

Global Seminar

UFZ HELMHOLTZ Centre for Environmental Research

Solutions for the ONE WORLD: monitoring of chemical pollution under low capacity settings

Chemical pollution is a global problem with regionally different composition, sources and impacts threatening water resources, human health and ecosystems all over the world. While data bases on pollution are rapidly increasing in many high-income regions such as Europe, data on chemical pollution in low- and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia and Middle- and South-America are rather scarce. While analytical instrumentation and common monitoring, assessment and mitigation strategies are widely lacking, awareness on pollution problems is increasing globally and excellent and dedicated scientists and practitioners are ready to address pollution problems in their countries. The current workshop aims to bring international pioneers in chemical monitoring together with a specific focus on the Global South and the establishment of a sustainable network to find solutions to pollution all over the world.

WORKSHOP GOALS:

1) Initiative for a global network on monitoring, understanding and minimizing chemical pollution in the ONE WORLD.
2) Scientific exchange on chemical pollution, related risks and impacts and major drivers in the Global South and on needs, capacities and gaps in monitoring
3) Pilot study to demonstrate the opportunities of monitoring of chemical pollution under low capacity settings.
4) Initiative for a review/policy paper on the status, gaps and urgent needs in the field of monitoring, understanding and minimizing chemical pollution in the ONE WORLD.

In preparation for the meeting, participants will be invited to (i) take part in a low-effort pilot study involving water sampling, and (ii) complete a questionnaire about the possibilities for water quality monitoring in their home country. Further details will be provided in the near future.

EVENT INFORMATION

CHECK IN:	Wed, 17.09.2025, 8:30-9:00	**REGISTRATION:**	Please register by June 15th, 2025: Global Seminar
CHECK OUT:	Thu, 19.09.2025, 17:00	**ORGANISING TEAM:**	Prof. Dr. Saeed Albaseer, Prof. Dr. Werner Brack, Dr. Saskia Finckh, Dr. Faith Kandie, Christina Pietruska, Dr. Christian Schmidt, Dr. Naeem Shahid
VENUE:	Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research UFZ Permoserstr. 15 04318 Leipzig Germany		

Ramsar Convention COP15 Side Event on Youth Engagement

The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15) to the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** will take place from **23 to 31 July 2025** in **Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**.

WWQA will participate in the Ramsar COP15 side event **"Empowering Youth: Capacity Development and Youth Engagement in Wetland Conservation and Sustainable Development."**

🗓️ **30 July** | 🕕 **18:30–19:30**

The session hosted by the Global Nature Fund and UNDP, will feature brief presentations by various organizations highlighting youth-focused activities in wetland conservation. WWQA will share its experience supporting youth-led initiatives to advance water quality monitoring and action.

World Lake Conference

🗓️ *21–25 July 2025*

📍 *Brisbane, Australia*

The 20th World Lake Conference will take place in Brisbane under the theme **"Lakes as Sentinels for Integrated River Basin Management."** The event will bring together experts, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss the role of lakes in environmental monitoring and sustainable water management.

Job Openings

Consultancy: Project formulation for strengthening hydrological services for Costa Rica and Panama (Remote)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Home-based/Remote

Deadline: 22 July 2025

For more information: https://erecruit.wmo.int/public/hrd-cl-vac-view.asp?jobinfo_uid_c=39505&vaclng=%20en

Intern positions - Water team

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Deadline: 1 August 2025

Apply here: https://www.oecd.org/en/about/careers/internships.html

Dive Into WWQA's YouTube Channel!

Missed a WWQA webinar? No worries! You can catch up on all our past sessions by visiting the WWQA YouTube channel. Dive into discussions on water quality, sustainability, and more. Check it out here: WWQA YouTube Channel

WWQA Membership Application Form

The WWQA coordination team has set up a WWQA Membership Application Form to keep our growing membership organized.

We kindly request all members to fill out the form :)

https://forms.office.com/e/BeF5iRuaP3

In the July issue of YEMAYA

World Youth Skills Day

Please follow our social media handles at:

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/wwqa

Visit our website at: www.wwqa.info

WWQA
World Water Quality Alliance

*Unless otherwise indicated, all contributions are by the WWQA coordination team.

YEMAYA welcomes articles, opinions and audio-visual material related to the issue of water quality. Please send any contribution to wwqa-coordination@un.org with a short 100-word biography, the name of your organisation and a phone number where you can be contacted.