

Program Staffing Updates

Farewell to Chris Clayton

After three years as the Level 2 Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program Coordinator for DNR and River Alliance of Wisconsin, Chris Clayton has moved on to a full-time position with the River Alliance. He will be working to help create a monitoring plan for the Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust, a collaborative effort to improve water resources in the Milwaukee River Basin. As Level 2 Coordinator, Chris has been around the state multiple times training, sampling alongside, and making connections with Level 2 stream monitors. He's helped the program grow and has been integral in its maturity to a level that is respected by many. One of his last tasks before heading to River Alliance full-time is finalizing a Quality Assurance Project Plan. This plan will add credibility to the efforts of everyone involved with Level 2 monitoring. All the best to Chris in his new endeavors (and best wishes to him and his new wife, Nicki, as they begin their lives together as husband and wife)!

And Goodbye to Deb Deppeler

Deb Deppeler, the Data Manager for volunteer stream monitoring, is also leaving the program due to the time constraints associated with changes to her full-time job teaching at the university. She's done much to streamline data quality checks and to help Level 2 monitors get set to use the SWIMS database. We'll miss Deb and her database programming skills! The DNR will be hiring a new data manager to work with citizen monitors and to take on additional database responsibilities that focus on assisting streams and rivers work at DNR.



Steve Hemersbach, Georgia Janssen, and Carol Vedra monitor Rock Cr. in Clark Co.

Allison Werner Stepping In

Our goal in this transition period is to continue to provide volunteers the same level of support as we have over the past few years with three staff persons on board. With that in mind, Allison Werner, the Local Groups Program Manager with River Alliance, will step in this fall to help with the transition between Chris Clayton and the next Level 2 Program Coordinator. She will be working with Kris Stepenuck to help make sure that community outreach efforts, data reporting potlucks, and the 3rd Annual Citizen Stream Monitoring Symposium will go off without a hitch.

Hiring a New Level 2 Coordinator

DNR has committed to using a combination of funds – including federal stimulus funds – to hire a new Level 2 coordinator. The fact that DNR decided to fund this position during a period of tight budgets is a sign that the DNR sees value in maintaining a successful relationship between the Department and citizen monitors. Many thanks to all of you for helping to build that trust. Your hard work and dedication have helped show

that citizen stream monitoring has a legitimate place alongside professional water monitoring efforts.

If you're willing to take a moment to express your thanks for funding the Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program and to share a story of how it has made a positive impact in your community, we feel your words would mean a lot to DNR Secretary, Matt Frank and Water Division Administrator, Todd Amb. Please email them (DNR.Secretary.Frank@wisconsin.gov and Todd.Amb@wisconsin.gov) or send a note to share your thanks and stories with them at:

Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
101 S. Webster St.
PO Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921

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Stream Monitoring Data Reports

Data Reports: Level 1

We are in the process of developing data reports for Water Action Volunteers (WAV), Level 1 data for 2009. Each Level 1 volunteer and their local coordinator will receive a postcard showing data results for this year as compared to the past three years of data for the site (if available). Once completed, these postcards will be available online as printable pdf files so you can share the information in your local communities. To help us prepare these, please check that your site location is mapped correctly in the WAV database (<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/wavdb/>).

Don't forget, you don't have to wait for these postcards to arrive to review data results for a site. You can use the WAV database to view your site's data over time, compare to other sites, or see a map of monitoring locations that is linked to the data.

Data Reports: Level 2

To access reports of your monitoring data, go to the following web page (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level2/swims.html>) and click on the link to instructions for generating three types of data reports: individual monitoring site reports, regional reports to compare your monitoring site with others nearby, and graphs of your temperature data.

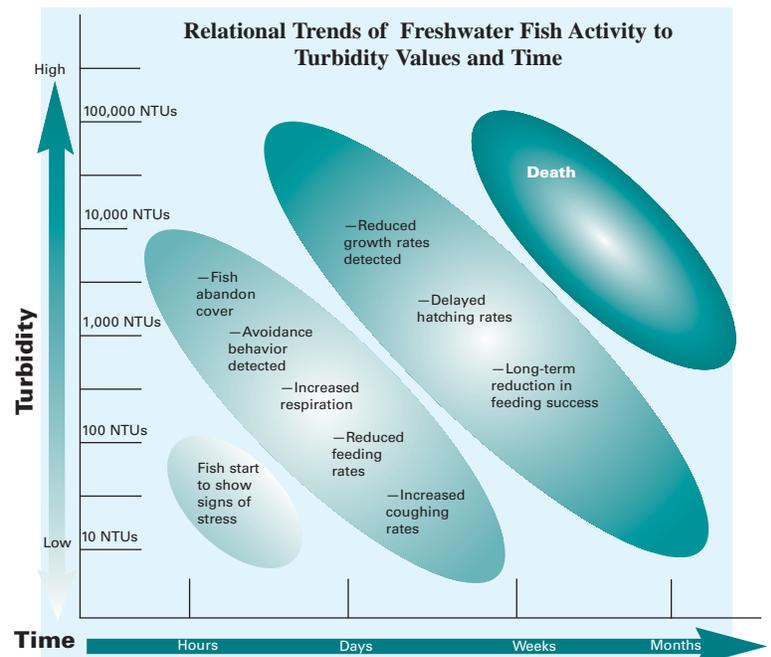
Or you can wait until this winter when we will post regional reports to the website. This way, we generate the reports for you.

Data Reporting: Levels 1 and 2

There's only one catch to getting these reports developed; We need you to enter your data into the proper database by January 4, 2010 so that the reports will include all data from 2009.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Visit <http://www.wisconsinrivers.org> and click on "Invasive Species" on the left to see how well you do on a quiz to identify some aquatic invasives that threaten Wisconsin's waters.



Volunteers do Great Work, Again, in '09

Level 1 Highlights

The Level 1 Stream Monitoring Program remains strong after 12 years. Volunteers have reported data for 134 sites and more data are being reported each week. We welcomed new volunteers from many areas of the state, with 20 trainings held throughout the spring and summer. Thanks to all the local program coordinators who hosted these trainings and to all the volunteers for spending a Saturday learning to monitor – and many other days out visiting your monitoring sites!

It's invigorating to be able to see changes over time at sites due to the longevity of the data. For instance, at Wingra Creek in Madison, turbidity between 2002 and 2008 ranged between 10 and 65 NTU, with an average of 22 NTU. Turbidity had never been less than 10 NTU. However, this year, turbidity was measured at <10 NTU on five site visits and only once was it worse (14 NTU), which means things were looking good for the fish and invertebrates that live in the stream (see figure above).

Thanks to everyone for your continued commitment to monitor at stream sites across the state! You are building a data set that can help us understand our effects on water quality and changes that occur over time.

Level 2 Highlights

Level 2 stream monitoring continues to thrive. In fact, Chris Clayton has found it more difficult to keep up each year. Monitoring Assistant, Christina Anderson, was willingly thrown into the mix to help pay field visits to many of the Level 2 volunteers. (She loved her time spent with you, by the way.) In 2009, we added many new volunteers in Adams County, which has now become a hotbed of citizen stream monitoring with 43 monitoring stations throughout the county. The Wolf River Chapter of Trout Unlimited also began Level 2 stream monitoring this year and have taken to it...well, like a fish to water. New volunteers were also trained with groups already participating in Level 2: Valley Stewardship Network, UW Parkside Geosciences Club, Galesville Ettrick Trempealeau High School, and Milwaukee Riverkeeper.

Level 3 Highlights

On the Level 3 front, three programs in particular stand out. First, the Wisconsin Ephemeral Pond Project (WEPP), which began in 2007, continued this year after being much-simplified during the off-season last year. UW-Extension Basin Educator, Gail Epping Overholt, with support from DNR and the Citizen Water Monitoring Network, coordinated with a dozen partner groups in southeastern Wisconsin to host an early spring training for 50 volunteers. Their task this spring, summer and fall, was to make repeated visits to mapped "potential" ephemeral ponds and determine if they were indeed ephemeral ponds. These wetland ponds are host to many amphibians and invertebrates in spring, and are essential for their reproduction. These ponds then dry up in summer or fall. The volunteers' efforts build on a DNR project to map these wetlands using aerial photography and soil maps – the volunteers are helping to verify the mapping process so it can be adapted and used more broadly, and also to build a data set of these wetlands in Wisconsin. This year over 50 ephemeral ponds were visited. Gail, along with Tom Bernthal from DNR, will be preparing a partner guide this fall. It's designed to help local groups, such as nature centers, adopt the project and support volunteers to locate ephemeral ponds in future years.

The second Level 3 program to highlight is the Marsh and Water Quality Monitoring Program. Funded through the DNR Partnership Program, this partnership between the UW-Superior Lake Superior Research Institute, Bird Studies Canada's Marsh Monitoring Program



Local coordinator, Amy Eliot, works with volunteers on marsh and water quality monitoring project. Photo courtesy of Amy Eliot.

(MMP), and the Citizen-based Water Monitoring Network of WI, was set to begin in 2008, but got snowed-out on the training dates. That didn't stop us this year!

The MMP operates across the Great Lakes region, with volunteers monitoring birds and/or amphibians (frogs and toads) during three site visits in spring and early summer. The grant allowed us to pilot-test the use of volunteers to collect water quality and aquatic macroinvertebrates in Superior-area marshes. Combining MMP-collected bird and amphibian data with water quality and macroinvertebrate data will provide scientists, wetland managers, and the public with more information with which to track marsh habitat health. The Duluth/Superior area was chosen for this pilot initiative due to its status as a "Great Lakes Area of Concern" – a region that has been designated as having impaired aquatic habitats. Local Remedial Action Committees can use volunteer-collected data like this to track the recovery of their wetland habitats over time.

We had mixed success with these efforts. Like in most areas around the Great Lakes, it was a cool and windy spring and summer in Superior, which affected the timing of the amphibian breeding seasons, and made it extremely difficult for volunteers to time their surveys right to hear the frogs and toads calling. Even MMP Program Coordinator, Ryan Archer, and Aquatic Surveys Volunteer and Data Coordinator, Kathy Jones, noted that they had difficulty picking a date when temperature and moisture conditions were appropriate for monitoring – and

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they've been with the program for years. Volunteers in Superior were able to hear some early breeders – the spring peepers and chorus frogs – and did collect water quality and macroinvertebrate data. Results are being compiled now and will be shared with the program participants in the coming weeks.

We will continue the program with just MMP amphibian and/or bird monitoring in 2010. If you are interested in participating – no matter your location in the state – contact Kris Stepenuck.

Finally, check out page 5 of this fall's edition of the national *Volunteer Monitor* newsletter. Central Wisconsin Trout Unlimited is a featured program in the "Amazing Volunteers" section. Congratulations CWTU!

Making Sure Hard Work = Good Data

As the Level 2 program matures, we have to remain diligent about collecting quality data. To help ensure this, Chris Clayton developed a quality assurance plan for the Level 2 program. The plan ties together all aspects of the program - from trainings to instructions, monitoring, and data entry. It helps define and communicate how the data can be used and what benchmarks have to be met when collecting data to ensure they will be accepted for the defined uses. The plan is being edited as this article is written, and will be approved by the DNR and the Environmental Protection Agency (hopefully this fall). It's a great step to support the credibility of citizen-generated stream monitoring data.

New Stream Monitoring Curriculum Being Piloted

Many schools participate in Level 1, WAV stream monitoring, but the program was not aligned with Wisconsin model academic standards, and each teacher had to develop their own strategy for including stream monitoring in their courses. To address this, we talked with many teachers who already use WAV in their classrooms. We gleaned their ideas and got their input on how stream monitoring would fit as a week-long curriculum in middle and high schools and how to link the methods with WI model academic standards. This summer, we recruited 12 teachers from across the state

to pilot the curriculum, and partnered with the Mazomanie Science Outreach Outpost, the UW-Madison Center for Biology Education, and the UW-Madison Bio-core Program to offer a teacher training and graduate credit to them for participating in the pilot effort. We also recruited many volunteer monitors to assist with these field trips held during September and October. We've received a lot of valuable feedback from many who have participated in this pilot effort already, and will meet with the teachers in November to get their feedback and suggestions. Over the winter, we'll edit the curriculum and hopefully have a finished product to share broadly with teachers across Wisconsin this spring. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this effort!

Fall Data Sharing Sessions

Many local programs will be hosting fall and winter data sharing sessions. Watch for information from your local coordinator about time and date for a local event in your area, or if you are interested in planning an event feel free to contact Kris Stepenuck or Allison Wer-



Deb Deppeler demonstrates how to search for data reports in the SWIMS database.

ner for assistance. We can help with data analysis and presentation, or simply by sharing information from other groups' sessions with you to help you plan.

Awards on Hiatus

You may have noticed we're not seeking out nominations for Volunteer Stream Monitoring Awards this year. That's because the program is on hiatus for a year. Keep your eyes peeled for great stream monitoring work being done in your community that deserves recognition, and consider submitting a nomination when the call goes out in fall 2010!

Symposium – January 23, 2010

Mark your calendars! The third annual Citizen Stream Monitoring Symposium is planned for Saturday, January 23, 2010 at UW-Stevens Point University Center from 9 AM- 3:30 PM. There will be a \$10 per person charge and pre-registration will be required. More details will be shared on the WI Stream Monitoring electronic distribution list and the WAV and Level 2 Stream Monitoring websites as we finalize plans.

For now, we'd like to tempt your participation by mentioning the following highlights for the event:

- Learn how to connect with your county to provide water quality data that will help them protect and restore our streams and rivers
- Have a chance to win one of several TidBit thermistors donated by the Onset Corporation (valued at over \$100 each)
- Learn about fish of WI sloughs from retired DNR biologist Dave Marshall
- Hear examples of how your data are being used by DNR and Universities
- Learn how to obtain data reports and site maps using online tools
- Don't miss any football games while attending the Symposium, as none are scheduled for that day!
- Network with volunteer stream monitors and local coordinators, DNR and county staff, and others interested in and involved with the program
- Share your program with others in a poster session

WAV (Level 1) Database Updates and Information

WAV volunteers, did you know that you can enter all the details of your biotic index and your habitat monitoring into the WAV online database and not simply just the final score you calculate? To do this, when you are entering your data, simply click on "Enter Habitat Details" or "Show/Hide Calculator" for habitat and biotic index respectively, and a data form that matches your data sheet will appear. Once you complete the online data form, and click the "calculate" button, the database will automatically calculate your score for you and fill in the data table with that score. It's easy and

adds a lot of value to the data you are inputting to the system.

This summer we shifted site registration from collecting Township, Range and Section information to collecting GPS coordinates for your sites. This change has helped us register your sites more easily and link them with the DNR's sampling site identification codes more easily. It also makes it possible for every new site that is registered to appear instantly on our new site map, powered by Google Maps. The maps show all sites for which GPS coordinates have been entered, and, if you hold your mouse over a site, median data (the middle number obtained in all of your sampling visits) will appear for several parameters. Plus, if you click on the link to the site name, the database will show all data ever collected for that site. Check it out at: <http://www.uwex.edu/erc/wavdb/>

Community Outreach Toolkit Available for You!

Bret Shaw, Professor in the Life Sciences Communications Department at UW-Madison is wrapping up a 2-year project working with our program. We've shared information about his and his graduate students' efforts to increase outreach about your stream monitoring successes in your local communities in this newsletter over time (Summer 2008; Spring 2009).

The latest news from this project is that we have developed a special section of the Citizen-based Water Monitoring Network website to help you with outreach about streams in your local communities. It's accessible at: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/outreach>

Contacts for the Stream Monitoring Program (Fall 2009):

Kris Stepenuck, UW-Extension and WDNR
608.265.3887
kfstepenuck@wisc.edu

Allison Werner, River Alliance of Wisconsin
608.257.2424 x 113
awerner@wisconsinrivers.org

Photos: Chris Clayton, Amy Eliot, and Kris Stepenuck
Newsletter content: Kris Stepenuck and Chris Clayton
To be removed from this mailing list, please contact Jan Torkildson at torkildson@wisc.edu or 608-262-2634.