The Wisconsin Citizen-based Stream Monitoring (CBSM) Program offers citizens multiple opportunities to learn about, monitor, and protect our state’s streams and rivers. The CBSM Program is co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the River Alliance of Wisconsin, and it is part of Wisconsin’s Citizen-based Water Monitoring Network. This stream monitoring fact sheet describes the three levels of participation that accommodate the varied interests and time availability of citizens.

For more information about the Network, go to: http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu

Wisconsin’s Citizen-Based Water Monitoring Network

For more detailed information about the three levels of monitoring please contact WAV Coordinator Kris Stepenuck (kstepenuck@wisc.edu) or Level 2 Coordinator Chris Clayton (cclayton@wisconsinrivers.org) directly or visit our program’s website:

http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu

Wisconsin Citizen-based Stream Monitoring

Thus far the [citizen's] data have been helpful in confirming and making management decisions, especially in regard to trout stocking.”
Scott Toshner, WDNR Fisheries Biologist

“It’s been enjoyable to work with such dedicated people who care about Wisconsin streams.”
Mark Hazuya, WDNR Water Quality Biologist

“The public needs to know that streams are a part of life and life doesn’t work without water. Everyone thinks of fish right away, but not only the fish are affected. Birds and other animals use the stream.”
Jerry Seel, Citizen Monitor, Fandu Lake, WI

“The data citizens collect is useful to [DNR], it’s useful to the people who are doing the monitoring, and it’s useful to other grassroots organizations that are trying to find out the quality of the stream water in their area and help make local decisions about what to do.”
Kathy Mason, Citizen Monitor, Madison, WI

“I’m contributing to preserve our natural resource… I just love being outdoors, so while I’m in the outdoors [stream monitoring allows me to] contribute.”
Georgia Johnson, Citizen Monitor, Greenwood, WI

“I look at volunteer stream monitoring as an extension of education.”
Pete Jopke, WAV Coordinator, Dane County

“I would encourage everyone who lives anywhere near lakes or streams or rivers, to sort of adopt that — start watching over it. I just think that all of us need to stay involved.”
Janice Redford, Citizen Monitor, Cashton, WI

“Many times someone may call to report a spill or manure runoff event after the fact or my drive time can be over an hour to get to the site. Having citizen monitors with the experience of using water sampling equipment and documenting observations in the area can speed up the data collection process.”
Cindy Koperski, WDNR Water Quality Biologist

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**Stream Monitoring Levels**

**Introductory Monitoring**

Water Action Volunteers (WAV) is designed to:

- Introduce citizens to the basics of stream monitoring through hands-on participation, and
- Educate about the connection between land use and the resulting effects on water quality.

WAV methods are simple and cost efficient, allowing access to stream monitoring to many. Citizens can monitor where and when they are able, based on their schedules and resources. Everyone starts with Level 1 (except under special circumstances). After a year, citizens can remain as WAV monitors or choose to participate in Level 2 or Level 3.

WAV is coordinated locally, with partners such as UW-Extension Basin Educators, counties, nature centers, environmental groups and schools sponsoring citizen efforts. A list of local WAV coordinators is available http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/monitoring/contacts.html. Local sponsors are encouraged to support both WAV and higher levels of the program. This provides access to new participants and opportunities for seasoned monitors to move up through the levels over time.

WAV methods provide data that can be used to identify water quality problems that need immediate attention, to prioritize sites for additional monitoring or restoration; to get a general picture of water quality in a local area, or for other purposes. Data are entered to a web-accessible database with automated graphing and summary statistics available www.uwex.edu/erc/wavdb.

**Steping up to higher levels**

- **Level 1**
  - Coordinator: Kris Stepenuck (UWEX/WDNR)
  - 45 locally-organized programs reach 300 adults & 68 sites monitored in 2008
  - a total of 6,300 site visits to-date

- **Level 2**
  - Coordinator: Chris Clayton (River Alliance/WDNR)
  - WDNR Liaison work with 17 citizen teams
  - a total of 2,400 site visits to-date
  - 70 sites monitored in 2008

- **Level 3**
  - Coordinators: various
  - WDNR and other professionals work with experienced citizen monitors
  - 13-plus projects identified to-date
  - Coordinators: various

**Status and Trends Monitoring**

Level 2 offers citizens a more intensive stream monitoring experience. Citizens are asked to follow a specific monitoring schedule (i.e., once a month, on predetermined dates) from May – September and often asked to monitor at specific locations. Citizens monitor using Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (WDNR) methods. To participate in this level, citizens should have monitored for one year at Level 1 (e.g., WAV).

Level 2 monitoring offers many citizens opportunities to work with local WDNR biologists to monitor streams of concern to the group and/or to the biologist. Citizens who are potentially interested in participating in the program are provided an orientation session to alert them to the rigor of the program and allow them to decide if it fits their interest and time availability. If they opt to participate, they are provided a full-day training session. A local WDNR biologist works as a liaison with the group to help determine monitoring sites, quality check methods, and assist with data analysis.

Participation in this level of programming is limited by program funding and time availability of the Level 2 Coordinator and WDNR biologist. Efforts are underway to train people statewide as trainers to allow for more local coordination, similar to the WAV program.

**Special Project Monitoring**

Level 3 stream monitoring is a unique opportunity to address a specific water quality issue or concern. These projects are defined annually and involve a wide range of complexity, expense, and time commitment. Citizens participating at this level will often work with WDNR biologists with whom a trusted relationship has been built through their participation in Levels 1 and 2. Examples of projects can be found at: http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level3.

To ensure a full commitment participating at this level, citizens should have monitored at Level 1 previously.

Local groups can also seek funding to support this level of monitoring on their own. Program sponsors routinely announce funding opportunities available to local groups but, unfortunately, funding, training, or on-going local support for these efforts is not guaranteed due to lack of staff time to support every citizen effort statewide.

**Data collected through the program are entered into the same online database used by WDNR staff. Annual reports, which summarize findings, are provided to volunteers, and data sharing sessions bring together the volunteers with WDNR staff who help summarize findings to date.**