Water Action Volunteers Stream Monitoring News

Spring 2006

Water Action Volunteers (WAV) is a statewide program for Wisconsin citizens who want to learn about and improve the quality of Wisconsin's streams and rivers. The program is coordinated through a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin – Cooperative Extension. Twice a year, the WAV stream monitoring program distributes the national Volunteer Monitor newsletter along with updates about the WAV stream monitoring program to individuals who have been trained in the programs' methods.

Training DVD Set Available

During the past two years I have been working with Basin Educator, Peggy Compton, UW-Platteville Professor, Kristopher Wright, and Russell Hill at UW-Platteville TV Services to develop a training DVD series for WAV stream monitors. This two set DVD series is hot off the press and is available free to you as a WAV monitor, teacher or trainer, or for Watershed Education Resources Centers. It includes:

- Refresher training for each of the six WAV parameters
- Educational PowerPoint presentations about macroinvertebrates, stream ecology, and watersheds
- An introduction to the WAV stream monitoring program
- An overview of monitoring results since 1997
- Resources for more information about streams, & more!

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the DVD set, please contact me (Kris Stepenuck; kfstepenuck@wisc.edu or 608-265-3887) or Peggy Compton (peggy.compton@ces.uwex.edu or 608-342-1633).

Remove Your Sunglasses When Monitoring Turbidity

Last week I was in the field at one of the State's Discovery Farms working with Volunteer Monitor Al Bauman, and I realized I had my sunglasses on as I was checking turbidity. Since wearing sunglasses can affect the readings we get when using the turbidity/transparency tube, we should all pay attention and be sure to remove them before taking these readings.

Stream Monitoring Awards

The 2006 Wisconsin Stream Monitoring Award winners have been announced. Some of the winners received their awards at the River Alliance of Wisconsin's Annual Spring Confluence on April 22 in Madison, while others will receive their awards at the Northwestern Wisconsin Lakes Convention in August. Congratulations to the 2006 winners!

- Teacher: Charles Bomar, Biology Professor at UW-Stout
- Pioneer: Pete Jopke, Dane Co. Watershed Project Mgr.
- Group: Beaver Creek Citizen Science Center
- Adult: Don Campbell of Eau Claire
- Employee: Nancy Turyk, Center for Watershed Science and Education at UW-Stevens Point

Citizens Monitoring Bacteria

In the enclosed *Volunteer Monitor* newsletter you may notice that the feature article is about citizens monitoring *E. coli* bacteria in streams in the upper Midwest. What you may not be aware of is that some of the volunteers involved in that project are right here in Wisconsin. Last year 9 individuals volunteered their time to participate in this Level III (Special Research) project. This year 25 people will participate. They will be testing two home lab methods for monitoring *E. coli* bacteria in streams or lakes near their homes. They will also send samples to the State Lab of Hygiene to compare their home lab results with traditional lab methods. With data collected over the past two years and during this summer in all six participating states, project staff hope to make a recommendation to other volunteer monitoring programs about which home lab methods work best for volunteers. Many thanks go out to Wisconsin volunteers: Meg Marshall, Janice Redford, Jerry Hanson, Don Campbell, Shirley Ellis, Don Nettum, Becky Schaffer-Peterson, Pat and Mike Cassidy, Jeren and Tsavo Rekemeyer, Plinio Beres, Tracey Ledder, Nancy Larson, Jack Wichita, Dennis Johnson, Anna Brady, Beth Bettenhausen, Dale Wozniak, Denny Richmond, Allison Piper, Chuck Heidt, Deborah Vaughan, Jeanine Mason, Elroy Rasmussen, Don Brown, Russ Stoller, and Mikaela Robertson.

Thank You for Completing the Survey!

Thanks to many of you who completed the recent survey about citizen stream monitoring. In all, Kim Leizinger sent out 320 paper copies and emailed 395 people a link to the online version of the survey. 334 people completed the survey. We are in the process of compiling results and making sense of what you told us. Many of you took extra time to include extended comments about the citizen stream monitoring program. Thanks so much for your time spent not only in completing this survey, attending trainings and educational events, and monitoring, but for your continued commitment to this program overall. Your efforts contribute to protection of our streams and rivers. Your genuine caring, dedicated efforts, and endless energy are inspirational to me as coordinator for the effort statewide.

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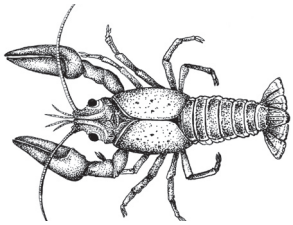
Spring Trainings

As in the past 5 years, Level I WAV Stream Monitoring (Educational and Baseline Monitoring) efforts continue to expand across the state. This year began with a Train the Trainer event in Kenosha in early April, and has been followed by 17 volunteer trainings held in locations across the state. There are a few trainings still being planned for Southeastern, Central and Northwestern Wisconsin. Check the online events calendar for specific training locations: http://clean-water.uwex.edu/wav/events.htm

Crayfish Survey Continues

During the past two years volunteers have been collecting crayfish as part of an ongoing Level III (Special Research Projects) UW/DNR research project to identify which types of crayfish reside in which waterbodies in Wisconsin. Over the winter we found out that this project will continue in summer 2006. Currently one training for volunteers is scheduled for July 12, 5:30-8:30 PM at Beaver Creek Citizen Science Center in Fall Creek (715-877-2212).



Family Level Macroinvertebrate Identification

WAV received DNR Partnership Program funds to pilot family level macroinvertebrate identification with volunteers using the "Guide to Aquatic Invertebrates of the Upper Midwest" by Bouchard. Normally, when citizens in the WAV program identify macroinvertebrates, they identify them to order level (that is, the invertebrates are identified as a mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies, etc.).

For this Level III pilot effort, volunteers were trained to identify which type (family) of mayfly, stonefly, etc. they collected. Volunteers from the Valley Stewardship Network, the Little Wolf River Monitors and the Central Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited have met regularly this spring to identify invertebrates collected early in the spring with assistance of DNR Biologist Mike Miller. This month they'll be asked to test their ID skills on a pre-identified sample.

Identifying macroinvertebrates to family level can offer a more exact picture of existing water quality at a stream site than current WAV methods since different families of macroinvertebrates within an order can have varying responses to pollution.

Partnership Program Funds Available

$100,000 are available for citizen monitoring efforts for the 2007 fiscal year. The proposal period closes on June 30, 2006. Get details about this source of funding which can support your local efforts at: http://atriweb.info/cbm/

Citizen-based Water Monitoring Pilot Projects

Sixteen citizens' groups across the state are participating in the Level II Stream Monitoring Pilot Projects (to conduct Status and Trends Monitoring on streams using Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) monitoring methods). Coordinator Frank Fetter worked with liaisons from each of the 5 DNR Regions to conduct trainings and he is now beginning to enter the data the citizens have collected into a new DNR online database. The groups are monitoring at stream sites recommended by DNR staff or which are of interest to their local group. Each month they monitor dissolved oxygen, pH, and transparency. These citizens must calibrate the meters they use before each visit to their stream site and keep a calibration log for this equipment. In addition they have installed continuous temperature recording devices at their stream sites. The groups share equipment with other nearby groups for best use of resources. This summer DNR staff will visit the citizen monitors at their monitoring sites to make sure things are going well, and to assess the quality of their work. A report will be developed this fall explaining how the project went and outlining how Level II monitoring may be best implemented statewide in the future.

Watch Out for Wild Parsnip!

Among other poisonous plants (such as poison ivy) that many of us can easily recognize, wild parsnip is a non-native species which, after contact with it, can cause our skin to blister due to photo-toxic chemicals within it. According to its Wisconsin Wildcard, the leaves are shaped like parsley and the flower stalks can grow to a height of 4 feet and "have umbrella-like clusters of yellow flowers". Wild parsnip is found statewide in many locations, including alongside streams and roads, so can be a potential hazard as you make your way to your stream monitoring location. Use the photo above to help you identify this plant so that you can avoid making contact with it.

UW Extension

Newsletter written by Kris Stepenuck, WAV Volunteer Stream Monitoring Coordinator. If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, contact Kim Leizinger (leizinger@wisc.edu or 608-890-0281)

Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources