

## FAQs from WDNR Watershed Staff about the Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program

### What is the Citizen-based Water Monitoring Network?

To help preserve and protect Wisconsin's over 15,000 lakes and 86,000 miles of rivers, it is important to first understand how these waterbodies function and then take note of their status. The Citizen-based Water Monitoring Network of Wisconsin offers citizens multiple opportunities to be part of this learning process and to monitor our state's waters (e.g., lakes, streams, ephemeral ponds, marshes). To learn more, the Network's web address is: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/index.html>.

### How is the Network different than the Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program?

The Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program is a subset of the broader Network. The program is designed to complement other WDNR programs, increasing awareness of stakeholders, building capacity for natural resources protection, and contributing to the data set used to make management decisions about the state's natural resources. This program has three levels in which citizens can participate. Visit these web sites for more information:

- Level 1, Water Action Volunteers (WAV): <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/monitoring/index.html>
- Level 2: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level2/stream.html>
- Level 3: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level3/index.html>

### Can you tell me more about the three levels of the Citizen-based Stream Monitoring Program?

Everyone initiates participation in Level 1, the WAV program. After a year, citizens can remain as WAV monitors or choose to participate in Level 2 or 3. WAV methods are simple and cost efficient, allowing access to stream monitoring to many. The goals are to introduce citizens to the basics of stream monitoring through hands-on participation, and educate them about the connection between land use and the resulting effects on water quality. Local coordinators implement WAV across the state with assistance from the statewide WAV Coordinator. Usually local coordinators are Basin Educators or other Extension or University staff, nature center, county, or a municipality's staff, teachers, or volunteers. WDNR staff generally have little involvement with WAV monitoring.

Level 2 offers citizens a more intensive stream monitoring experience. Citizens are asked to follow a specific monitoring schedule and use WDNR methods. WDNR staff act as liaisons to the program. In this role, they help citizens determine monitoring sites, participate in annual quality assurance/quality control assessments of the volunteers, and assist with year-end data assessment and presentation.

Level 3 stream monitoring is a unique opportunity to address a specific water quality issue or concern. Citizens participating at this level will often work with WDNR biologists with whom a trusted relationship has been built through their ongoing participation in the program. Other researchers or organizations may also have projects for which citizen monitors are sought.

### If a citizen contacts me about stream monitoring, who should I have them contact?

If citizens have never conducted stream monitoring, they should contact their local WAV coordinator (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/monitoring/contacts.html>) or the statewide WAV Coordinator, Kris Stepenuck (608-265-3887 or [kfstepenuck@wisc.edu](mailto:kfstepenuck@wisc.edu)). She can help identify a contact or to establish a local WAV program.

If citizens have previous monitoring experience, they may be able to initiate their participation with Level 2 or 3. In this case, direct them to Chris Clayton, Level 2 Coordinator (608-257-2424 x 120 or [cclayton@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:cclayton@wisconsinrivers.org)). Alternatively, direct them to the Network website (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level3/index.html>) where they can review available Level 3 projects and contact the coordinator of a project in which they are interested.

### Should I be concerned that citizen monitors' efforts might cause elimination of WDNR jobs?

No! The idea behind the program is that with shrinking budgets biologists can't do all the work they're asked to do. This multi-level stream monitoring program was developed to first educate citizens about streams and the monitoring process, and to help gain their buy-in and support for your protection and restoration efforts. Those who are interested can take the next step and conduct monitoring in some of the same ways you do, thereby helping to augment or supplement your work, not take it over from you.

### How much time will I have to spend to participate in this program?

We ask that you commit 30 hours per year to the Level 2 effort. Level 3 participation is optional and the time commitment to participate will vary greatly among projects. The objective is to allow citizens to participate without asking too much of staff.

### **How do we biologists balance our time and the number of groups in our area?**

We recommend initiating your participation with one local group and expanding your efforts as you feel comfortable. Early on, you will spend more time becoming familiar with the program and your citizen contacts. As time passes, you will find that some aspects of your involvement take less time, and you may have more time to act as liaison to additional groups or work with individuals on a Level 3 project. If you do have to turn a group away, please tell Kris Stepenuck or Chris Clayton so they can follow up.

### **What is expected of me (biologist) with the different levels?**

WDNR staff who are liaisons for Level 2 are asked to recommend monitoring sites, participate in annual quality assurance/quality control assessments of the volunteers (or delegate this to a LTE), and assist with year-end data assessment and presentation. The interaction between staff and citizens at this level allows you to get to know the citizens and observe their aptitude for stream monitoring. Later on, based on a trusted relationship built in Level 2 between the citizen monitors and you, you may have Level 3 projects in which you want to involve them. In that case, you would spend time on study design, seeking funding, making equipment purchases, and/or training or supervising volunteer monitors.

### **Are their funds available that would support my involvement in the program?**

Yes. Funds available to you to work on citizen stream monitoring projects are linked with Watershed Bureau Project funding. You can request funds for a LTE to offset your time to participate as a Level 2 liaison, to purchase equipment for the volunteers, or to ship and analyze nutrients or solids in the lab.

### **What can I get out of being part of this program?**

Benefits to staff in the program are many; they do depend on the level of commitment by the individual. They include:

- Building successful positive relationships with local community members
- Building capacity to sustain and improve local natural resource protection and/or restoration
- Gaining local knowledge about a resource through interaction with community members
- Improving the image of WDNR in local communities
- Collecting data useful to you in making management decisions

### **What is expectation statewide for citizen stream monitoring?**

Our goal is that well-trained and capable citizens will effectively contribute to assisting WDNR with the monitoring that is required to be done on streams as well as augmenting that work. A time commitment is needed from you for upper levels to ensure an effective partnership between citizens and the WDNR.

### **How is the citizen stream monitoring program funded?**

The WAV Coordinator position is fully funded by UW-Extension through grants (though is expected to be partially funded by DNR by late 2009). A current publications budget is (and future salary is expected to be) supported through WDNR with Nonpoint Source Education (Section 319) funds. The Level 2 Coordinator position has been funded jointly through the River Alliance of Wisconsin and the WDNR since 2006. Settlement funds and grants were the primary source of funds from River Alliance. EPA Section 106 supplemental funds are contributed from WDNR. Each co-sponsor is able to leverage funds to make a broader impact than any group would be able to do on its own.

### **What is done with these data following collection? Can I access the information?**

Data that are collected with the WAV program are entered into an online database (<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/wavdb/>) which is accessible to anyone with web access for searching. Automatic graphing is available or data can be downloaded to conduct additional analyses.

Level 2 data are entered and stored in the WDNR Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System (SWIMS) database. WDNR staff can access the data through automated reports for individual sites or for groups of sites in SWIMS. Instructions for downloading these reports are available (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/level2/swims.html>).

### **How is data quality assured?**

All WAV and Level 2 participants receive training to conduct monitoring and receive written methods. In addition, video training is available to supplement WAV trainings. These training segments are available on DVD or online (<http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/monitoring/video.html>).

Once data are collected, they are only able to be entered to the databases by registered users. In WAV's database, all data entered by volunteers are held for approval by local coordinators, and edited if needed, before being stored in the database. For the Level 2 data, a WDNR database management LTE reviews all data and addresses any questionable data entries. Metadata for the databases is also available.