



# **First Biennial RiverWatch Symposium Set for Oct. 4 in Peoria**

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Godfrey, Ill. – Stream stewards across Illinois will convene Oct. 4 in Peoria to learn how 15 years of their collective sampling has been translated into real-world information during Illinois RiverWatch's First Biennial RiverWatch Symposium.

The symposium will run from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Hotel Pere Marquette. Gov. Pat Quinn, who is scheduled to attend the symposium, will receive an award acknowledging the strong support shown for RiverWatch. The day's event will also recognize several citizen scientists with service awards.

Laura Sass from the Illinois Natural History Survey will present the findings of her analysis of more than 15 years' worth of data collected by volunteers from all over Illinois. This first public presentation will show detailed trends and highlight the relevance of data collected by these citizen scientists. A poster session from 1-3 p.m. will conclude the day's events.

"The symposium will not only be a great opportunity for citizen scientists to see the relevance of the data they have collected, but for government agencies, and even for the public to understand the importance of the work done by citizen volunteers," said Nate Keener, RiverWatch coordinator.

RiverWatch was established in 1995 as a sub-program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Eco Watch Network, a statewide partnership of organizations and individuals working to protect Illinois streams. Certified volunteers called "citizen scientists" examine stream habitats and diversity of macroinvertebrate species to provide reliable water quality data that can be used by scientists to determine how the conditions of streams are changing over time.

In 2004, when IDNR could no longer financially support the program, a grant from then-Lt. Governor Quinn and several non-profit organizations provided support to maintain the basic components of the program. In the summer of 2005, the Lt. Governor's Office took the lead in creating a vision for a more comprehensive, statewide volunteer monitoring program. Since 1995, more than 1,700 individuals have received certification through RiverWatch, and 750 stream sites have been established for annual water quality sampling.

RiverWatch is a program of the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center. For more information, visit [www.ngrrc.org/river-watch/411-riverwatch-symposium](http://www.ngrrc.org/river-watch/411-riverwatch-symposium) or contact Keener at [nkeener@lc.edu](mailto:nkeener@lc.edu).