

Illinois RiverWatch honored with Green Leaf Achievement Award by HeartLands Conservancy

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ILLINOIS – One of two Green Leaf Achievement Awards in Youth and Education was awarded to the Illinois RiverWatch Network by HeartLands Conservancy April 19.

The Illinois RiverWatch Network is a statewide, non-profit, volunteer stream monitoring program. Volunteers are trained and certified to monitor and protect local streams.

“With only 15 percent of stream miles being monitored in Illinois, the RiverWatch program provides a vital service by training volunteers to monitor these streams to increase our knowledge of how Illinois streams are changing through time,” RiverWatch Biologist Matthew Young said. “RiverWatch volunteers are the main reason for this program’s success, putting in hundreds of hours monitoring and recording data to protect the health of our rivers.”

In southwestern Illinois alone, volunteers contributed nearly 100 hours of time to monitoring water quality in 12 streams, of which none had been assessed by the state.

RiverWatch goes beyond the state requirements for river monitoring and generates valuable water quality data and engages a wide variety of individuals and groups in education of stream habitat and macroinvertebrate monitoring.

Since its founding in 1995, more than 1,800 individuals have received certification through RiverWatch, and 800 stream sites have been established for annual water quality sampling. RiverWatch data can be accessed at www.ngrrec.org/Riverwatch.

The Green Leaf Achievement Awards celebrate achievements in different areas of environmental awareness—from individuals to groups to businesses—all making a local impact in conserving land, building greener communities, and engaging people with nature. The other Green Leaf Achievement Award in Youth and Education was awarded to Kim Petzing, Green Schools Coordinator in Madison County, Illinois.

HeartLands Conservancy recognized the achievements of six individuals and organizations that are making a positive impact on the environment in Southwestern Illinois during the second annual Green Leaf Achievement Awards presentation. The presentation took place during HeartLands Conservancy’s annual dinner.

RiverWatch is a program of the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, a partnership between Lewis and Clark Community College and the University of Illinois. To learn more, contact Young at (618) 468-2784 or riverwatch@lc.edu.