



Illinois RiverWatch citizen scientists monitor the health of Illinois streams

February 6 2017 9:40 AM



ILLINOIS – The Illinois RiverWatch Network is offering Illinois citizens and educators the chance to train to become citizen scientists and join the network of more than 250 volunteers throughout the state who monitor water quality of Illinois streams.

A series of one-day RiverWatch volunteer training workshops will be held throughout the state March 18-June 3. The workshops will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and combine both lecture and classroom time with field training in a local stream.

Registration is \$50 per person for most workshops and must be paid in advance of the workshop. Registration is free for Illinois 4-H groups.

“With less than 20 percent of stream miles in Illinois being monitored by agency biologists, extra stream data collected by RiverWatch citizen scientists is indispensable,” RiverWatch Coordinator Matthew Young said. “The scientific monitoring of our streams is important to safeguard their future.”

RiverWatch is a statewide partnership of organizations and individuals working to protect Illinois streams. Established in 1995 as a sub-program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ Eco Watch Network, RiverWatch certified volunteers, called citizen scientists, examine indicators like stream habitats and macroinvertebrate (stream bug) communities to provide reliable water quality data that can be used by scientists to determine how the conditions of streams are changing over time.

“The 2016 volunteer data showed improving water quality trends for 11 percent of streams monitored, but showed declining water quality trends for 4 percent of streams sampled,” Young said. “This allows resource managers to prioritize conservation areas and measure the success of ongoing watershed projects”

RiverWatch offers two programs to become involved with: RiverWatch Citizen Science (for adults and 4-H groups) and Stream Discovery (for grades 5-12 educators who wish to involve their students in stream monitoring). Both training workshops are for volunteers who have received no training or partial training through RiverWatch programs and who wish to become a part of the certified network of volunteers throughout the state.

RiverWatch and Stream Discovery are programs of the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, a department of Lewis and Clark Community College.

Since its founding in 1995, more than 1,900 individuals have received certification through RiverWatch, and 870 stream sites have been established for water quality sampling. RiverWatch data can be accessed at <http://www.ngrrec.org/Riverwatch/>.

To register for a workshop, contact Young at (618) 468-2784 or riverwatch@lc.edu. For more information about RiverWatch or Stream Discovery, or to register for a workshop online, visit www.ngrrec.org/Riverwatch.

2017 RiverWatch Volunteer Training Workshops

- March 18 – Urbana, Anita Purves Nature Center
- March 25 – Alton, The National Great Rivers Research & Education Center
- April 1 – Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- April 8 – Mahomet, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve
- April 22 – Jacksonville, Morgan County Extension Office
- April 22 – Grayslake, College of Lake County Grayslake Campus
- April 29 – Joliet, University of St. Francis
- April 29 – Peoria, Bradley University
- May 20 – Rockford, Atwood Center
- June 3 – Apple River, Apple Canyon Lake Property Owners Association