



Learn More about Microplastics in Fresh Water at NGRREC

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EAST ALTON – Join National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) scientists for an informative presentation on microplastics in fresh water during the next Neighbor Night from 5:30–8 p.m., Tuesday, May 7.

“Plastics are everywhere, even the most remote parts of the planet,” said NGRREC Scientist Tony Dell, PhD. “But despite their importance to the global plastic cycle, little is known about plastics in rivers and lakes. Most research on plastics is undertaken on marine systems, despite the fact that more than three quarters of the plastics found in oceans are derived from rivers, and little is known about the ecological effects of this plastic. We know it’s in rivers, lakes and flood plains, but what is it actually doing (if anything) to the countless microbes, plants and animals that live in these complex ecosystems? And what about the critical ecosystems functions and services they provide? We don’t yet have answers to these and other important questions, which are necessary for healthy waterways and human communities.”

Dell will begin with a public seminar about plastic pollution in freshwater systems, including discussions about research currently underway at NGRREC aimed at better understanding the plastic cycle in the Mississippi River and its ecological effects. This work is in collaboration with Saint Louis University's WATER Institute and forensic scientists at Staffordshire University in the United Kingdom.

Following the seminar, Dell will lead a behind-the-scenes tour of the NGRREC facilities and equipment being used in this research on plastic pollution, including large outdoor mesocosms and automated tracking facilities in the ecology lab.

“Neighbor Nights has always been about sharing relevant and timely research being conducted by NGRREC with our community, and microplastics may be our most relatable topic yet. This affects everyone,” said NGRREC Environmental Educator Allison Rhanor. “Plastics may break down to a point where they can no longer be seen,

but they're still there. They're just smaller. Research around the impacts of microplastics in the environment has been a growing field in recent years, particularly in marine ecosystems. But we know if microplastics are in our oceans, they're in our rivers too, and we want to help spearhead the study of microplastics in freshwater systems."

Schlafly Beer has partnered with NGRREC to support Neighbor Nights, and free Schlafly beer will be served during the event. Snacks and other refreshments will also be available.

The talk will start at 6 p.m., and the lab tour and demonstration will begin at 6:30 p.m.

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC)

Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities. To learn more about NGRREC, visit www.ngrrec.org.