

# **NGRREC Welcomes New RiverWatch Director, Stream Ecologist**

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**ALTON** – With a focus on Illinois' water quality and an understanding of the region's powerful connection to its rivers, Danelle Haake has joined the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center as the new Illinois RiverWatch director and stream ecologist.

“My work has everything to do with community,” Haake said. “People are connected to the environment in many ways, but one of the most fundamental is our connection with water. It is, literally, part of us. By learning about and protecting our water resources, we are learning about and protecting ourselves.”

Originally from St. Louis, Haake, who began her position in April, earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Missouri State University, Master of Science in Natural Resource Ecology and Management from Iowa State University and a Doctorate in Biology from Saint Louis University.

Illinois RiverWatch is a network of trained volunteers that collect quality assured data on wade-able streams and fosters coordination among groups involved in similar monitoring efforts.

As director of the Illinois RiverWatch Network, she will be running the state-wide citizen science program, focusing on water quality in Illinois. Haake will train volunteers how to measure water quality at events across the state. She will help them find local streams to monitor, then help them track and certify their data. The findings will then be generated into reports.

“I love having the opportunity to work with citizen scientists from across the state,” Haake said. “Every person in the Illinois RiverWatch Network has a background and a story that brings richness to the program as a whole.”

New RiverWatch volunteer scientists are trained every spring. Besides water monitoring, volunteers are also needed for event organizing, mapping and newsletter writing.

Haake wants to ensure data collected through the RiverWatch program is used within the community in policy making and community planning efforts. She also hopes to increase the program’s outreach and education efforts in under-represented communities and increase the diversity of citizen scientists.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Illinois RiverWatch Network. In celebration, a fundraising effort is underway that includes outreach to donors and auctions for the volunteers and partners.

Beyond her role with Illinois RiverWatch, Haake will conduct research focused on the impacts of pollution on the invertebrates that live in streams.

Haake’s professional affiliations and achievements include serving on the board of Stream Teams United for over 10 years – as treasurer for four years and president for

four years. For more than 15 years, she has been an active member of several organizations with missions supporting sustainability, ecology and water quality.

She has earned the Stream Team Ambassador Award, PEO Scholar Award and is a two-time, first place winner in the South Dakota Kayak Challenge, team division.

For more information on the Illinois RiverWatch Network or how to become a citizen scientist, contact Haake at (618) 468-2784 or [dhaake@lc.edu](mailto:dhaake@lc.edu). To learn more about NGRREC, visit [www.ngrrrec.org](http://www.ngrrrec.org).