



Statewide Volunteer Network Helps Shape Stream Health

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EAST ALTON – A series of upcoming training opportunities will prepare the next wave of citizen scientists to help shape stream health across the state of Illinois this spring.

The Illinois RiverWatch Network will host a series of statewide trainings throughout March and April, which will educate community members on how to monitor the health of their local streams.

RiverWatch, a community science initiative, is coordinated by the National Great Rivers



Research and Education Center (NGRRECSM) at Lewis and Clark Community College. Each spring, RiverWatch offers workshops where volunteers learn to collect and identify stream macroinvertebrates (water bugs) and describe the physical condition of the stream habitat. Upon completing training and becoming certified, volunteers may adopt a stream site where they can monitor water quality and contribute to a state-wide dataset using these RiverWatch survey methods.

“Macroinvertebrates are easy to collect and can tell us a lot about stream health,” RiverWatch Technician Hannah Griffis said. “The critters in our stream are impacted by pollution, habitat changes and other changes, whether natural or caused by humans. By monitoring the populations of these critters, we are able to get an idea of the overall health of the stream.”

RiverWatch workshops are designed for people with diverse educational backgrounds. The workshops will provide enough information for volunteers to monitor streams whether they have a biology degree or they just want to better understand the stream in their own backyard.

Upcoming RiverWatch Training Workshops

- 3/19 – Vermilion County – Danville
- 3/26 – Will County – Joliet
- 3/26 – Jackson County – Makanda
- 3/26 – Logan County – Lincoln
- 4/2 – Peoria County – Peoria
- 4/2 – Richland County – Olney
- 4/2 – Will County – Joliet
- 4/3 – Madison County – Godfrey
- 4/5 – Jefferson County – Mount Vernon
- 4/10 – Dekalb County – Genoa
- 4/16 – Winnebago County – Rockford
- 4/23 – Champaign County – Mahomet
- 4/24 – Kankakee County – Bourbonnais
- 4/24 – Lake County – Ingleside
- 4/30 – Knox County – Galesburg

Continuing education credits are available for current Illinois educators. Those interested should make a note on their registration form at <https://conta.cc/3stkSD9>.

The registration fee is \$50 for adults, which includes a copy of the RiverWatch manual as well as invertebrate identification resources. Up to two children per registered adult may attend at no cost.

For more information, visit www.ngrrrec.org/Riverwatch or contact Griffis at hgriffis@lc.edu or (618) 468-2781.

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.ngrrrec.org.