



Riverwatch Volunteers Monitor Stream Health Across Illinois

by Jared Smilack
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EAST ALTON – Volunteers across the state collect stream-quality data on their local streams with the Illinois RiverWatch Network.

Illinois RiverWatch Network is hosting several training sessions across Illinois in April and May, which will teach community members how to monitor the health of their local streams.

RiverWatch is a community science program 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 an important part of a stream ecosystem,” RiverWatch Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Griffis said. “When we start seeing changes in their communities, we know that the stream health may be declining.”

No previous knowledge or experience is required to attend RiverWatch workshops. The workshops will provide enough information for volunteers to monitor streams, whether they have a biology degree or want to better understand the stream in their backyards.

Upcoming RiverWatch Training Workshops

- 4/13 – DeKalb County – Genoa
- 4/14 – DuPage County – Warrenville
- 4/20 – Will County – Joliet
- 4/20 – Sangamon County – Rochester
- 4/21 – Peoria County – Peoria
- 4/22 – Vermilion County – Westville
- 4/27 – Madison County – Godfrey
- 4/27 – Lake County – Ingleside
- 4/27 – Coles County – Charleston
- 4/27 – Kane County – Elgin
- 4/28 – Boone County – Belvidere
- 5/4 – Johnson County – Simpson
- 5/11 – Jo Daviess County – Warren

Continuing education credits are available for current Illinois educators. Those interested should make a note on their registration form at <https://bit.ly/RW24Workshops>.

The registration for adults is \$50, which includes a copy of the RiverWatch manual and invertebrate identification resources. Up to two children per registered adult may attend at no cost. RiverWatch offers a limited number of scholarships if the cost of the workshop is deterring you from attending.

For more information, visit <http://www.ngrrec.org/RiverWatch> or contact Griffis at hgriffis@lc.edu or (618) 468-2781.

About National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC)

NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them, facilitating the efficient implementation of science into policy and practice. Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, 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.