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## Butler County Stream Team February News - 2011



### Volunteer Stream Monitoring in Southwest Ohio Next Sampling Day - February 12th

### Collector Levels?? What's that?

You may notice a new line on the sample bottle labels this month - *Data Collector Level 1 or 2*. So here's what that's about.

Over the last decade or so, the US EPA realized that the Clean Water Act goal of making our nation's surface waters "fishable and swimmable" could be helped by more monitoring than they have the personnel to accomplish. So they decided to encourage volunteer monitoring and asked state EPAs to come up with a process that would both ensure the quality of volunteer data and make the data available for all interested parties. A program to encourage volunteer monitoring was established in Ohio by House Bill 43 (HB43) in 2003. Rules for Ohio EPA's "Credible Data Program", to ensure the validity of data collected by volunteers, were published in 2006 (OAC 3745-4-01-06). The Ohio EPA has been working since then to establish the infrastructure to make the Credible Data Program work.

The basic structure of Ohio's program is for 4 types of data to be reported at 3 levels of data credibility. Data can be about the fish or macroinvertebrate communities, habitat quality, or chemical water quality. Levels of credibility are:

**Level 1** - used to "promote public awareness and education"

**Level 2** - designed for watershed groups to "evaluate the effectiveness of pollution controls, to conduct initial screening of water quality conditions, and to promote public awareness and education"

**Level 3** - the highest level of credibility, mostly for OEPA use, such as in "setting water

### Volunteer Spotlight Check Inside Coolers!

Stream Team coolers are equipped each month with more than just bottles! Inside you'll find supplemental information including:

- Sampling Instructions
- BC Engineer's Maps
- Reminder Magnets
- Stream Team Pamphlets
- \*Personalized Labels (for consistent samplers)

Be sure to pick up a reminder magnet this month and information pamphlets to share with a neighbor or friend!

Oxford Farmer's Market Cooler  
During the winter months, the Stream Team does not supply a sample drop location in uptown Oxford. Samples should be taken to the nearby Miami University Boyd Hall location until the weekly market resumes in May.

We would like to continue posting stories about our volunteers... so what's your story? If you have been involved in any outside activities relating to the environmental sciences, please pass along the information by emailing Donna McCollum at [mccollds@muohio.edu](mailto:mccollds@muohio.edu)

### Volunteer Opportunity Help Protect Local Waterways by Labeling Storm Drains

quality standards and evaluating attainment of those standards"

The Butler County Stream Team has been working toward attaining Level 2 status the last few years by filing a Project Study Plan and a Quality Assurance Protocol. That sounds easy, but it has been a tremendous time investment - and we're still working at making our group better!

One way we are complying with Ohio EPA requests is to report both level one and two data, depending on who collects it. And **here's the important part** - if you attended our **volunteer appreciation day and training last June**, or if you have been personally evaluated by Donna, Bob, or Lynn, **you have been certified as a Level 2 data collector and should circle the "2" on your label**. That means that in 2011, on a state-run database for volunteer group data, we can report your data as Level 2 - YAY! All other data will still be part of our Stream Team website, but for the Ohio EPA database they either will be reported as Level 1 or not reported.

One more thing - the data are reported only once a year to OEPA, so you're gonna have to wait a whole year to see our data up on their website - BOO!

If you have yet to be trained, look for another training session this summer. We'll announce it here in the ***Mark Your Calendars!*** section.

### **Safe Seasonal Sampling**

With the changing of seasons, samplers encounter various challenges and obstacles. Winter brings freezing temperatures, lower stream levels, icy conditions, and visibility issues from snow cover. Butler County Stream Team greatly values the safety of our volunteers, and would like to offer a few tips for safe sampling this winter season.

#### *Partner Sampling*

Any type of danger encountered while sampling can be reduced by sampling with another volunteer.



If you are like me, you are dreaming of warmer weather at this point, and perhaps making plans for spring. One great spring, or even summer or fall, activity that can benefit your neighborhood and local water quality is to help label storm drains. Communities across Butler County are looking for volunteers to add "No Polluting" signs to the drains.

Pollutants entering Butler County storm drains, either dumped purposely or carried in by rainwater, empty directly into creeks, ditches, or other waterways – no stopping at a sewage treatment plant for these guys! This means the oil leaking from your car or the fertilizer sprinkled onto the sidewalk washes down the drain, straight to the nearest waterway. Most people don't even think about where storm drains go, and may assume that dumping waste liquids down a storm drain is a good thing. So, labeling drain covers informs people who may be dumping pollutants (maybe oil, fertilizers, pesticides, yard wastes) where these toxins will reenter the environment.

Storm drain labeling is a simple project, and can take as much or as little time as you would like. It can be a fun and educational opportunity for families or social groups. If you would like to receive the free materials to label your neighborhood, please contact:

- Fairfield- Karen Wittner  
513-867-5348
- Hamilton- Darla Bokeno  
513-785-7280
- Middletown- David Duritsch  
513-425-1860
- Monroe- Bill Brock  
513-539-7374
- Oxford- David Treleaven  
513-524-5274
- All other areas, including the townships, Trenton, West Chester, New Miami, and Ross- Lynn White  
513-

### *Safety Vests*

Each cooler comes with a neon safety vest to make you more easily visible to cars.

### *Sure Footing*

Ice on roadways, hillsides, stream banks and streams should advise caution to volunteers. The use of safety ropes, proper footwear and good judgment can reduce safety risk.

### *Knee-High Boots*

Lower stream levels may mean you'll have to step into the stream bed to collect from a running source. Proper footwear will help keep you clean and more importantly, dry!

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### **Crisis Spot**

As you are out sampling or just out for a walk along the waterways and see something wrong, email us. We always want to hear from our volunteers and especially if there is a problem that can be corrected.

You are our eyes in the field, the first line of defense for streams in Butler County when there is a problem. Once the problems have been reported to us, we can pass it along to the appropriate agencies. For instance, one volunteer's

Thanks again for all you do for Butler County Stream Team!

Crisis Spot emails can be sent to Donna McCollum at [mccollds@muohio.edu](mailto:mccollds@muohio.edu).

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3720 [whitelr@butlercountyohio.org](mailto:whitelr@butlercountyohio.org)

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### Mark Your Calendars!

April 9, 2011: Open Lab - Come into the laboratory to learn what happens to the samples after you drop them off. Stream Team will host an Open Lab, beginning Saturday afternoon, to educate and train volunteers on the 7 tests ran each month.

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### What's your opinion?

What kind of environmental worries or questions do you have? Email your questions to Beth Downs and your inquiry may be highlighted in the next newsletter! [DOWNSEA2@muohio.edu](mailto:DOWNSEA2@muohio.edu)

For comments, concerns, or suggestions, please contact us at [mccollds@muohio.edu](mailto:mccollds@muohio.edu)

Butler County Stream Team Monthly Newsletter

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